

DELHI SOCIETY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY:

*Thesis Submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in the Fulfilment of the Requirements of the
Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY*

URVASHI DALAL

**Centre for Historical Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067
1998**

Jawaharlal Nehru University

Centre for Historical Studies

New Delhi 110 067

10 copies

Certified that the thesis entitled 'Delhi Society in the Eighteenth Century' submitted by Ms. Urvashi Dalal in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of this University is her own work and no part of it has been submitted to any university for any other degree.

Harbans Mukhia

Professor Harbans Mukhia
Supervisor

M. K. Palat

Professor M.K.Palat
Chairperson



Contents

Acknowledgements

	Introduction	1-19
1	Topography	20-82
2	Life in the <i>Havelis</i> : The Structural Givens	83-132
3	Life in the <i>Havelis</i> : Contesting the Givens	133-182
4	Patterns of Social, Religious, and Cultural Life	183-228
	Conclusion	229-230
	Plates	231-248
	Maps	249-254
	<i>Select Bibliography</i>	255-269

Acknowledgements

Perhaps I can never thank my supervisor, Professor Harbans Mukhia, enough for the role he performed in my thesis. Besides imparting an absolutely stimulating academic instruction, it is he who initiated me into the rigours of history as a science without inflicting a baggage of theories. Yet he always kept me conscious of the ambiguities of human society. I must admit that but for the inspiration he provided, and the confidence he instilled in me, this thesis — which I found quite a difficult exercise — would not have seen the light of the day.

To Professor Aslam Parvez is my humble debt for teaching Urdu, familiarizing me with its poetry, and offering the generous hospitality of his house for a month's stay in Old Delhi (Shahjahanabad present nomenclature). I thank his son, Naved Khan, for guiding me around the city. Scarcely less is my gratitude to Professor O.P. Mohan for the selfless help he provided in going through the Urdu material whenever I got entangled. All this while his health has been in a painful state. His trenchant criticism of my views has had a very positive impact on my thesis. I thank Dr. Rajender Pradeep for introducing me to him. To Dr. Akhtar Kazmi and Dr. Ain-ul-Hasan I am thankful for a gratuitous coaching of Persian, Professors S.R. Kidwai and A.W. Azhar for suggesting Urdu and Persian sources, and Dr. Yunus Jaffery for assisting me with Persian sources.

I acknowledge the graciousness of Professor Maurice Aymard who invited me to the Maison des Science de l'Homme for two months. Besides acquainting myself with French writings in history, I got perspectives on my work from the historians themselves. While Professor Aymard's introduction to the concept of the organising principals of a medieval city led me on to theorize the theme on the topography of Shahjahanabad, Professors Jacques Le Goff, Jacques Revel, and Arlette Farge have had an impact on the study made of the habitat and family. The

warmth at the Maison made my stay in Paris a most memorable one. A subsequent trip sponsored by the University Grants Commission was useful in crystallizing my ideas. I thank the Charles Wallace Trust for funding my stay in London.

Even as I thank the staff of National Archives, special mention is made of Hardeo Singh, Shanti Sarkar, Mrs. Santosh Tyagi, Jagmohan Singh, S.R.S. Mann, and Sudhir Kumar. At the National Museum I am deeply indebted to J.C. Grover who helped me with a singular commitment. At the Maharshi Dayanand University — where I teach — I am grateful to K.C. Bhardwaj, K.C. Dadhwal, R.K. Goyal, U.S. Dalal, N.K. Gautam, and W.S. Dalal for many 'extra'-administrative assistances. My thanks is, not the least, to Subhash Gulati who typed out my thesis with utmost sincerity and patience.

Friends always help: Clea Finkle and Atul Kohli never failed to send me any material I asked for from the United States, Ameeta Sharma and Rohit Sharma cheerfully ensured the security during a period when even a day's absence could have a house — where I live — broken into. Neelima Dahiyya assisted me in many unaccountable ways, and Brijender Singh always came forward to make trying circumstances easier.

My family has been exceptionally supportive, particularly my elder sister, Anjali, and her husband, Satvir, who liberated me from its many obligations. My nieces' and nephew put up — though not without the appropriate noise — with my inability to spend time with them. I can see Shaista's unbelievable look that a thesis that has been on 'since the day she was born', and seemed as permanent as the seasons, is over. It is a blessing that my parents are there to see my research completed and to them I dedicate the fruit of my labour.

U. Dalal

Introduction

An emphatic attestation of the vibrancy of the eighteenth century in Indian history inheres in the paradoxical perceptions (constructions) of it in historiography. A mighty empire, which straddled over virtually the entire subcontinent, fell after an existence of one hundred and fifty years. Its collapse unleashed forces which were to make the years that followed a period of intense ferment and grave turmoil, shaping the future of the country irrevocably. There were many destructions and creations, displacements and replacements, changes and continuities which may have been for better or for worse. In several ways, with so much action and drama packed in it, the near hundred years have become the historian's dream century.

To some historians the eighteenth century comprised entirely a dark-age. The Empire had disintegrated and the country was thrown into stagnation, decay, and decline. Chaos and anarchy swept through its wide plains. An all round crisis seized it which manifested in the economy, society, and culture of the times. At the core of the argument of these historians rests the existence of political unity of the Mughal state as a factor of peace, law, order and consequent efflorescence of state and society. In their perception the stability and progress of society is predicated upon the existence of a centralized and powerful state. Fascinatingly, this group transgresses several dividing lines and encompasses historians as diverse as the imperialists, liberals, nationalists, and the Marxists.

This view of eighteenth century has a tradition of rather long standing, going into the early nineteenth century, when James Mill published his *History of British India* in 1817. Amongst the earliest to have studied India's past with modern intellectual apparatus, Mill's understanding of history was nonetheless determined by his commitment to utilitarianism and a missionary zeal to reform societies accordingly. Thus he found the medieval or aristocratic past of India, as

of Britain, backward and barbaric, which only plunged into a deeper chaos with the death of the last great Mughal, Aurangzeb. To him, it was despotic having no rational and legal institutions. The society was dominated by priestly dogmatism and the worst forms of their superstitions. Its caste system was scarcely beneficial to civilized society, and its treatment of women was full of contempt.

Such a civilization could only have discouraged or stifled freedom of rational thought, growth of science and technology, and development of philosophy. In other words it was unprogressive. The arts and letters that obtained within this social and political milieu were, according to Mill, also devoid of rational thought. History was only absurd legends. He had no liking for poetry. The great Hindu epics were prolix and insipid; he could not tolerate their extravagantly ornate language, fancy, and ingenuity. The dramas were wretched. Judging sculpture by Greek, painting by Renaissance, architecture by neo-classical standards and, in general, the level of artistic achievement by those of technology, Mill considered Indian aesthetics decidedly inferior.¹

The views of Mill were supplemented by those of the Christian missionaries and foreign travellers/observers who descended upon India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Their proselytizing spirit interwoven with secular activities at social reform, the missionaries emphasized the ignorance, illiteracy, and near-barbarism they perceived in the country. It was idolatrous and superstitious, having horrifying religious and social practices. The caste system spelled inconceivable miseries, while the condition of women was awful. The people lacked morality and intellect. The government was tyrannical.² The foreign

-
1. Critique of Mill has been obtained from George D. Bearce, *British Attitudes Towards India, 1784-1858*, London, 1961, pp.69-75; also J.S. Grewal, *Medieval India: History and Historians*, Amritsar, 1975, pp.67-74.
 2. Bearce, *British Attitudes*, pp.80-2; Grewal, *Medieval India*, pp.67-8, 74-7.

travellers/observers reinforced the opinions of the missionaries even as they highlighted the desolation and decay that seemed to appear around them in the wake of a great empire's fall.³

If the British observers displayed an unconcern for the ramifications of imperialism, their perceptions nonetheless proved relevant to the colonial-administrator historians who employed them to justify Britain's rule over India. Thus the eighteenth century, for them, was a period of chaos and anarchy from which they had rescued the country and the society.⁴

The modern vision of progress and development underlining the above views was the reference point from which the well-known Indian historian, Jadunath Sarkar, appraised and passed a verdict on the century. The first to have studied the period by itself and, in that, with a wealth of sources, Sarkar composed his researches in a stupendous effort of four volumes entitled *Fall of the Mughal Empire* published over 1932-50. According to him the Mughal rule was the first step necessary for the modernization of India and its formation as a nation. It united it politically, bringing the isolated provinces under one sceptre. An administrative uniformity was given to the country and, providing it with one language, a cultural uniformity. It was placed under one 'civilization'. The Mughals established peace, law, order and ensured the safety of routes for the trader and traveller; in consequence trade and industry prospered and the wealth of India grew. It was put in contact with the outside world. The Court's patronage of cultural activities led to development in art and letters as never before. The

-
3. Of the travellers/observers one may mention Robert Orme, Alexander Dow, William Hodges, Thomas Twining, and W.H. Sleeman.
 4. The well-known amongst these historians are H.M. Elliot, William Irvine, V.A. Smith, and W.H. Moreland.

country came to the forefront of the civilized world. It possessed military might. The happiness of the people was promoted to a degree 'unapproached except in the mythical past'.

All this, however, crumbled when Aurangzeb died and the empire disintegrated. A multifaceted crisis enveloped India, and with a singular passion Sarkar mourns the state of affairs that overtook it elucidating thereby the reasons, as he saw, for the decline. The throne was occupied by weaklings and imbeciles, Nobles were ambitious, selfish, treacherous and corrupt. Like the emperor they were dissolute and depraved. The sovereign had become a pawn in their intrigues and politicking. The degeneration of royalty and nobility resulted in a collapse of administration. Centrifugal forces erupted all over the empire and provinces one after another asserted themselves against it. Armed warfare broke out everywhere as regional and local powers — Marathas, Sikhs, Jats, Rohillas — rebelled. Agricultural cultivation fell and, the revenue failing to reach the centre, a financial bankruptcy engulfed the state. The country lost its material prosperity. Justice and equity evaporated and civil disorders were rampant. The Centre was so enfeebled that it fell an easy prey to attacks from outside. As great invaders came, its military lay helpless. Their devastations caused untold miseries and hastened the empire's decline. In this pervasive vision of darkness Sarkar found complete 'rotteness at the core of Indian society' in the midst of which its cultural creativity only decayed. Such was the tragedy of the country that he was led to consider the British rule over India, with its political unity and strong state, science and technology, modern art and education, a 'divine dispensation'.⁵

5. Jadunath Sarkar, *The Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 4 vols., Delhi, 1988-92 (4th edn.), 1, pp.xv-xviii, 1-2, vol.4, pp.284, 289-90.

A passion as intense flows through the writings of the nationalist historians as V.P.S. Raghuvanshi, Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, K.K.Datta, and Tara Chand. Thus K.K.Dutta, epitome of this genre of historiography, opens his book with the breathtakingly definitive statement: 'The eighteenth century was a tragic period in the history of our country.' For Tara Chand 'an indescribable malaise had settled upon the spirit of India' and 'a moral and intellectual canker was sapping its vitality.' However, for the nationalists, the decay and stagnation, the consequent enfeeblement and loss of vigour, brought India under foreign occupation which was the real calamity. The British rule prevented a national economy from developing into a modern industrial economy. To these historians, eighteenth century India had a developed commodity production and a vast network of merchant capitalism. There were financial institutions which linked it up with urban, regional, and international markets of the sub-continent. The Mughal state had stimulated trade and commerce through various means, such as its court and military expenditure. These economic relationships were now severely disrupted. Henceforth India was subjected to a ruthless economic exploitation engendered by Britain's growing industrial capitalism. Raw material was transported from here to feed the industries there. India became a market for Britain to sell its manufactured products. The traditional rural and cottage industries of the country consequently declined. Its handicrafts received death blows. The export of cotton, silk, saltpetre, indigo, and opium which had made India a sink of gold and silver without the least prospect of return, came under British control. The result was a drain of wealth and progressive impoverishment of the country.

The fabric of its social life also suffered with the alien contact. The vitality of India's community life, which since time immemorial had protected its social order and morality against convulsions of all kinds, was impaired. The British had no empathy with its ability to arbitrate and settle affairs concerning all aspects of

life more forcefully than their legal system could ever do. Now the disputes of people were caught in endless litigation and distant courts. This unsettled the harmony of social relationships and community life, the soul of Indian villages where lived the teeming millions. It invaded their autonomy and affected the social structure of the entire country which these atoms constituted. In other words foreign occupation brought ruination upon a nation.⁶

To look at the eighteenth and, as an extension, the nineteenth century in this light has become convention. Ironically enough the dark-view received significant reinforcement from Marxist historians who otherwise radically changed the face of Indian historiography. Irfan Habib, the doyen of Marxist historians of medieval India, has described the century as one of 'reckless rapine, anarchy, and foreign conquest' in his *Agrarian System of Mughal India* which blazed new trails during the 1960s and 70s. What brought the Marxists to a perception similar to the conventionalist, whilst devastating the latter's formulation of what caused the Empire's decline, was an understanding of the Mughal state as 'rent extracting' and the organization of a centralized politico-economic structure to achieve it. In order to draw out the surplus from the peasantry, the ruling class, itself based in the great cities, devised a uniform revenue structure and imposed an elaborate administrative machinery which running through the provinces and the districts, reached down to the smallest unit of the village. The revenue, demanded in cash, required transportation of rural produce to the urban markets and, after conversion, sent to the centre over

6. K.K. Datta, *Survey of India's Social Life and Economic Condition in the Eighteenth Century, 1707-1813*, Delhi, 1978 (2nd edn.), pp.1-13; V.P.S. Raghuvanshi, *Indian Society in the Eighteenth Century*, Delhi, 1969, pp.1-16, 24-9; Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, 4 vols., Delhi, 1965, 1st pub., 1961, vol.1; Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, *A Study of Eighteenth Century India*, Calcutta, 1976, pp.1-5.

territories far and wide. To facilitate it the state provided the safety of routes and established a good degree of law and order within the empire. The resources thus raised were distributed amongst the ruling class — a small minority comprising the emperor, his household, and a band of nobles loyal to him. It enabled them to lead a life-style that was highly urbane, luxurious, and extravagant. This spurred the growth of towns and cities, developed urban crafts and industries, and promoted trade — all made possible by a developed money economy. In the opinion of Marxist historians the Mughal state, though exploitative, was an agent of agrarian and commercial growth.

This tightly knit system, however, came crashing down when peasant rebellions resulted in a fall of agrarian production and decreased the flow of surplus flowing to the centre. Availability of less for distribution made the nobles restive, and aggravated by a systemic crisis of *jagirs*' shortage to gratify the new entrants and a struggle over lucrative estates, conflicts broke out within the nobility which manifested along regional and ethnic lines. The factionalism of the nobles, on one hand, undermined the imperial authority for they were the mainstay of the sovereign's support. On the other, it weakened the bureaucratic-administrative apparatus' controls over the empire. As the emperor's power weakened, governors in the provinces carved out autonomous states and regional or local powers established rebel kingdoms. The unity of the empire collapsed and it was convulsed in internal warfares. The disorders further prohibited the movement of revenue and whatever was sent could be looted and pillaged. Revenue came to be farmed out, but to escape the revenue farmers' rapacity, peasantry fled the land leading to depopulation of the countryside and agricultural devastation. The state was seized with financial bankruptcy. In the anarchic conditions, trade and commerce destabilized, and towns declined. The empire fell prey to external

invasions, as that of Nadir Shah's (1739-40), which only hastened its decline. The country came under foreign domination, and Britain's easy victory at Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764) over the native powers opened India to the ultimate tragedy of colonialism and capitalist exploitation.⁷

Quite an uncanny assimilation with the imperialist, liberal, and nationalist historiography. To recapitulate, the dark-viewers have perceived the eighteenth century as one of unmitigated political, economic, and socio-cultural decline. The fundamental planks of their argument are: collapse of a strong state, political anarchy and chaos, disintegration of unified empire, fall in agrarian productivity, destabilization of trade and commerce, decline of towns, external invasions and foreign conquest.

A little different voice could sometimes be heard here and there. Unable to view the cultural growth of the century in moralistic terms and condemn as decadence, some of the historians accepted it only to explain away as a paradox: 'The brilliance of Mughal culture... stands out sharply against the background of political turmoil and the gloom and depression caused by it' says Z.U. Malik in *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*.⁸ It remained, obviously, an enigma because as per his analytical framework culture should have declined when the state lost the

-
7. Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, New York, 1963, pp.317-51; M.Athar Ali, 'Recent Theories in Eighteenth Century India', *Indian Historical Review*, 12, 1-2, 1986-87; M.Athar Ali, 'The Mughal Polity — A Critique of Revisionist Approaches', *Modern Asian Studies*, 27, 4, 1993; M.Athar Ali, 'The Passing of Empire: The Mughal Case', *Modern Asian Studies*, 9, 3, 1975; M.Athar Ali, 'Towards an Interpretation of Mughal Empire', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1, 1978; Z.U. Malik, 'The Core and the Periphery: A Contribution to the Debate on the Eighteenth Century', *Social Scientist*, Nov-Dec., 1990.
 8. Z.U. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, Bombay, 1977, pp.342-405; Z.U. Malik, 'Some Aspects of Mughal Culture During the First Half of the Eighteenth Century', *Studies in Islam*, Jan., 1965, pp.17, 40-2.

economic capacity to patronize and its general capacity to ensure cultural efflorescence. The appreciation, therefore, was devoid of a theoretical understanding and not only had nothing stimulating to offer but failed to distinguish the 'brilliance' of the creativities.

The view of eighteenth century as a dark-age dominated the historical world until recently when a frontal challenge came from historians who, defying any categorization, are rather colourlessly dubbed as the 'revisionists'. Broadly speaking, the revisionists instead of looking from above, view the period from below, from the grassroot level. The counter-position unfolds a century which was bright. Contrary to the gloom and doom, the decline of a mighty and overarching empire unleashed tremendous energies. Forces of regeneration and growth were fostered, the supposed political disorders and destructive wars notwithstanding. This manifested in the economic dynamism and political vigour of the new small states which replaced the Mughal imperial order. Their rural economy was more robust than assumed before with the state directly involved in the promotion of agrarian production, such as instituting efficient tax-gathering procedures. Investments by revenue farmers of the time increased commodity production, especially artisanal, which was of a high degree and this, in turn, enhanced agricultural prosperity. Urban and regional market networks proliferated, and financial institutions linked them with the commodity production, which was further connected to international markets. All this was spurred by a growing international trade in which Indian artisans, merchants, and especially bankers

played a crucial role. This phase of political economy steadily obtained until the first quarter of the nineteenth century and continued the agrarian and commercial growth of the seventeenth century.⁹

Amongst the proponents of the bright-view of the century may be reckoned Frank Perlin, C.A. Bayly, David Washbrook, Andre Wink, and Muzaffar Alam.¹⁰ Important synthetic statements, however, make C.A. Bayly the leading voice of the revisionists position. Repudiating the concept of a dark-age, Bayly's counter-position is argued on the following premises: Formerly peripatetic imperial officers and minor service officials niched themselves in small towns where they formed the core of a 'gentry' to which were added local magnates who were not a formal part of the Mughal state. An increasingly homogenized merchant class, also located in small towns, emerged which was composed of great imperial merchants and bankers, and petty local traders. The new gentry and the mercantile groups coalesced, forming ties of mutual interest between themselves. That the warfares

-
9. Burton Stein, 'Eighteenth Century India: Another View', *Studies in History*, 5, 1, 1989, pp.4-9; Burton Stein, 'A Decade of Historical Efflorescence', *South Asia Research*, 10, 2, Nov., 1990, pp.132-6; Burton Stein, 'Arrested Development: But When and Where?' in Clive J. Dewey, ed., *Arrested Development in India: The Historical Dimensions*, Delhi, 1988, pp.50-7; Athar Ali, 'Recent Theories'; Athar Ali, 'The Mughal Policy - A Critique'; Malik, 'The Core and the Periphery'.
10. Frank Perlin, 'Proto-Industrialization and Pre-Colonial South Asia, *Past and Present*, 98, 1983; 'State Formation Reconsidered', *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 3, 1985; C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Cambridge, 1983; David Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics: The Madras Presidency, 1870-1920*, Cambridge, 1976; Andre Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India — Agrarian Society and Politics Under the Eighteenth Century Maratha Svarajya*, Cambridge, 1986; Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-1748*, Delhi, 1986.

of the century were destructive is conceded by Bayly but the impact, he asserts, has been exaggerated. Much of the loot seized in the wars was sold within India, and the markets quickly recovered.

The general economic decline was limited during the period, offset by alternate benefits and compensations. Rich farming tracts gained additional cultivators, artisans, and merchants. Traders, merchants, and bankers drifted to more lucrative places. The growth of new small states resulted in a proliferation of royal courts and offered the compensation of many new markets which came up to serve their elite. If commodities such as cotton and indigo lost the prominence they had enjoyed earlier, others such as opium arose. If large scale urbanization suffered a blow, there was a growth of small urban centres (*qasbas*) to recoup the loss. A decline of great cities as Delhi and Agra was balanced by the rise of cities like Lucknow and Fyzabad. The overall urban population remained fairly constant with segments of population moving to areas secure and yielding gains. Political and economic depression of the Mughal ruling class and the social groups benefiting from them only meant transfer of power and resources to alternate classes.¹¹

The revisionist position has interesting implications. Continuous prosperity from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries meant that eighteenth century was not marked by economic and political disjunctures, particularly the imposition of British rule, as the conventionalist, nationalist, and Marxist historiography envisaged.¹² The new gentry and local magnates shifted

11. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars*, pp.1-34. Critique of his views has been taken from Stein, 'A Decade of Historical Efflorescence'; Stein, 'Eighteenth Century India', pp.4-5; Stein, 'Arrested Development', pp.52-4.

12. The disjunctures are death of Aurangzeb - 1707; Nadir Shah's invasion - 1739; Battle of Panipat - 1761; Battle of Plassey - 1757; and Battle of Buxar - 1764.

allegiance from the Mughals to the small states and thence to the British. Continuity from earlier times manifested at other levels. The small states implemented economic programmes — though much improved — based on that of Mughal state, structured their polity — though based primarily on military — according to it, and sought legitimacy for their gains from its authority. The assertions of the local and regional powers were a result of their growing strength generated by increased resources rather than spoilage from a weak centre. The agricultural and commercial growth at lower levels, the emergence of a new gentry, the prosperity of local magnates, and the formation of a unified merchant class reflected a stubborn intermediary socio-economic structure and vigorous grassroots institutions. The revisionists therefore put the whole concept of a centralized politico-economic structure on its head. To them decline does not historiographically define the eighteenth century.

In retrospect, cultural decay during the period was significantly questioned in a prescient monograph, *The Crisis of Indian Civilization in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, by Hermann Goetz, published in 1938. While accepting a general political decline and moral decay, Goetz asserted that the same could not be said of its culture. Studying the art forms of the century in their own context he found them full of vitality and, far from declining, culture effloresced.¹³ Much later, George Bearce reappraised the cultural creativities of the era and widened the coverage hitherto.¹⁴

13. Hermann Goetz, *The Crisis of Indian Civilization in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, Calcutta, 1938.

14. George D. Bearce, 'The Culture of Eighteenth Century India: A Reappraisal', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress (PIHC)*, 1961; George D. Bearce, 'Intellectual and Cultural Characteristics of India in a Changing Era, 1740-1800', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 25, 1, Nov., 1965.

Thus so much was happening during this brief period, such manifold inversions and irreversible transformations were being enacted. However, to us, they did not lead into one direction alone; historiographically significant as the 'dark' versus 'bright' debate is. The century was an extremely vibrant one and to paint it in a single colour seems somewhat inadequate.

The interest in the eighteenth century emerges phoenix-like and the present work selects the social history of Delhi during it as the subject of its study even as the focus, at times, get diffused in keeping with the often scanty and scattered contours of the evidence. Being the imperial capital, Delhi must have felt a direct and acute impact of Mughal political decline. Conventionally the city is perceived to have witnessed universal decline and desolation — a view receiving an unusual depth of feeling from the *Shahr Ashob*¹⁵ of its poets singing requiems over its devastation and destruction, and the melancholic tales of the European observers 'rhapsodizing' over its decaying monuments. The view of a 'dark-Delhi' has been nuanced by Bayly who opines that the city experienced 'varying degrees of dislocation' and not unmitigated decline. It could only have been so if Delhi had forfeited all its functions simultaneously viz., commercial, political, and agricultural. From this standpoint the city exhibited remarkable resilience and innate structural strength.

There is no doubt that Delhi's large productive hinterland came under severe economic disruption, and the city's control over it became fragmented. Rich tracts of commercial farming appear to have fallen out of cultivation with the decline of the canal system and the famine of 1783; warfares destroyed large areas of orchards; and bullocks and peasant labour were pressed into service in the army. Within the area there seems a distinct growth of nomadic or pastrol economy in

15. A genre of Urdu poetry lamenting the decline of cities.

place of settled agriculture. This change had an implication: the traditional plundering activities of some pastoralist tribes were located only seventy miles away from the city's gates. Ecological and political change compounded each other so that by the end of the century a large majority of villages in the Delhi tract neither paid revenue, nor sent their produce to it; the profits of good agriculture were appropriated by the local Sikh or Jat magnates instead.¹⁶

The city's long distance entrepôt trade may have been less disrupted than contemporary observations would lead one to assume. Sustained, above all, by trade to the north-west in high value but low bulk goods, this trade in luxuries could easily be re-routed over the northern mountains. Infact, soon after the scarcities and political havoc of the late 1780's four large caravans in a course of three months were encountered going to Delhi. Lesser merchants, evidently more open to risks, attached themselves with the large caravans which had developed strong political ties with the Sikh warbands and the petty hill kings through whose territories they passed. The latter, particularly the Sikhs, gained from the caravan merchants weapons, luxury goods, and tax revenue. Therefore the bazaars of the city which depended on the north-west trade were still considerable at the end of the century and larger than those of many cities. In comparison to the trade in luxuries the bulk trade of Delhi which rested upon the river system of the northern plains was more at risk.¹⁷

The commercial strength of Delhi manifested, significantly, in the migration of Jain mercantile groups from Panjab and Rajasthan to the city. Already, by 1750, they seem to have established a stronghold within it and their

16. C.A. Bayly, "Delhi and Other Cities of North India During the 'Twilight' ", in R.E. Frykenberg, ed., *Delhi Through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture, and Society*, Delhi, 1986, p.230.

17. *Ibid.*, p.231.

movement into it appears unabated during the late eighteenth century. Obviously Delhi offered them a level of security to consider migration. The growing material prosperity of the community is reflected in the massive building activities they launched before 1800, constructing temples and *serais* (travellers resthouses), over the next quarter century. Besides the Jains, Delhi saw a slow and continuous drift into it of Khatri merchants from east Panjab. They became prosperous enough to buy property on the city's main thoroughfares from indebted Mughal aristocracy. What seems to have happened is that beneath the surface of political turmoils there occurred a gradual erosion of Muslim urban dominance within the city and a modification of its commercial — and cultural — base which slowly became indigenous. A Hindu hinterland of commercial agriculture asserted itself over the 'military, aristocratic, and Islamic colonies which had been planted in its midst'. The century, however, was only 'one episode in the transformation.'¹⁸

In contrast to the agricultural and commercial, Delhi's political functions remained significant all through the eighteenth century. The aspiring north Indian rulers, turning towards it for legitimizing their power considered it necessary to have their *vakils* and agents in the imperial capital.¹⁹ Thus Delhi survived and was not wiped off the map of India as two other Mughal cities — Korah-Jahanabad and Kara-Shahzadpur.²⁰ The apparent shrinkage of the city's size did not imply a corresponding decline in its population; the disorders and insecurity of the suburbs led to a greater concentration of population within its walls. Most of the *mandis* and the *ganjs* which existed there had disappeared by the end of the century. The total built-up area of the city had fallen by over half,

18. Ibid., pp.234-5.

19. Ibid., p.231.

20. These cities forfeited all their functions simultaneously. Ibid., pp.226-8.

but only 30% of the old markets had closed, many appear to have concentrated behind its walls.²¹ There remained in Delhi vibrant sectors which could be rapidly revitalized under more favourable political circumstances.²²

However, Bayly's concern to discover economic growth, and challenging the conventionalists concept of a 'dark-age', is at the cost of sympathy for the social classes who suffered by it. The woes of the city's poets may not be the universal reality but they do represent the devastation caused to an entire section of its populace, those whose everyday lives were tied to the empire and the court and its multifarious activities. The tragedy and misfortune they perceived around themselves was their reality of the decline which was no less important than the reality of the gentry, merchants, and magnates who stood to gain by it. The impact of the decline on Delhi was therefore differential and the realities it offers, the perceptions it evokes, are diverse.

A reality/perception of the impact which, neglected so far, triggered off my own interest in this study. Rising above the neat dichotomies of those viewing from above and those below it is far more complex, in that, it is collective, involving even those who saw themselves as the sufferers. The disintegration of a mighty and overarching state, it appears, bestowed upon the citizens of Shahjahanabad — rulers and lay alike — with a sense of liberation. A tremendous release of their social energies is discernible filling the city with a singular vigour and dynamism.

21. Ibid., p.225.

22. Ibid., p.232.

Being the imperial capital the catharsis in Shahjahanabad could but have been surcharged, and in an entire account, *Muraqqa-i Dehli*, written by Dargah Quli Khan is mirrored the force of the impact and its complexity.²³

A Deccani, Dargah Quli Khan visited Delhi as part of the entourage of Asaf Jah I, the Mughal governor of Hyderabad, when the latter had been called to it by the emperor, Muhammad Shah, to solve the political problems he was confronting. His stay in the capital, for barely three years (1737-40), is of profound historical significance: Nadir Shah sacked Delhi but the city appears at such effusive, even climactic, best that the sobriquet, *Rangeela* (Colourful), its emperor earned only emphasized the state metaphorically. A singular exuberance inhabited its walls which so captivated the lively and youthful sensibilities of the visitor from Deccan that it impelled him to preserve the newness of his experience in the form of a personal diary, which is the *Muraqqa-i Dehli*. This, infact, is the very raison d'etre of the diary's existence. As the title indicates, the entire account is a series of images that are impressions of the vitality he encountered in the social, religious, and cultural life of the inhabitants of Delhi, images which are seductive and acquire almost a surreal quality considering the times, in another aspect, were so difficult.

This thesis has been organized around three themes: the symbol of Delhi as a capital, its interpretation by the Mughals, and Shahjahanabad as a representation of their state's power and legitimacy; interpersonal relationships within the medieval habitat — the *haveli*; and socio-religious and cultural life of the inhabitants of the city in context of the empire's decline.

23. Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa-i Dehli*, Eng. tr. Chander Shekhar and Shama Mitra Chenoy, Delhi, 1989, Urdu tr. Khaliq Anjum, Delhi, 1993. The use of the account is based upon the Urdu version though for translations I have depended considerably upon the English version.

Sources :

Except the study on Shahjahanabad's topography (Chapter 1), this thesis has been literally created from scraps of evidence, sources of Mughal social history not being particularly abundant. It can only be reiterated that the conventional body of information — the Persian-language court chronicles — are concerned with political history of the emperors and the empire. Any reference to the society of the times comes by way of reflex which, again, is essentially on the imperial family, and mediated by an image of its orderliness and harmony. The subject of women is even more poorly documented, for, they scarcely left any records of themselves, such as, dairies or memoirs. At the outset one is denied an 'insiders' view of their life. There is, of course, Gulbadan Begam's *Humayun-Namah* but the account is so overwhelmed by the male figures dominating her life that it turns out more to be on her father, Babur, and her brother, Humayun. The scarcity of information on women is compounded by conditions of their seclusion where the chroniclers, who were men, never as much as talked of them. Whatever does make appearance on the pages of their products, again, is mediated by patriarchy.

But an awareness of the structural limitations of the sources only means tackling the problem and extracting information, howsoever meagre, from them. Lack of information has been sought to be overcome in various ways. I have extended the chronological and area bases of the sources employed, drawing data from either side of the eighteenth century and from other parts of northern India — a luxury which a researcher of social history may perhaps afford to indulge in, for, societal changes over time and space being very slow follow separate dividing spans from the political. I have made a considerable use of European accounts, strictly remembering that they represent the 'outsider's' view, though it is easy to forget that the 'insider's' view too is equally a construct. I have widened the genre of sources, making use of non-conventional ones. As it turns out, this research is

based upon chronicles, manuscripts, travelogues, architectural layouts and urban morphological studies, anthropological works, art historians and musicologists studies, memoirs and autobiographies, biographies, poetry, accounts on social customs, linguistic studies, paintings, and social and literary novels, from even the twentieth century.

Dargah Quli Khan's *Muraqqa-i Dehli* is a rare work, handsomely documenting the socio-religious and cultural life of eighteenth century Delhi. This would justify its extensive usage in Chapter 4. Accounts of the Englishwomen Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali and Fanny Parks figure prominently in Chapters 2 and 3. Being women, and educated, they were in an uncommon situation of not only having access to the women's apartments but writing about its inmates and happenings. More than other literary novels, illustrations from *Twilight in Delhi* by Ahmad Ali have been drawn upon because not only is the novel written by one whose soul is the old world of Delhi but it seeks to recreate the life of the city by focusing upon the happenings of a typical *haveli* within it. As in the European sources I have used the term 'native' in my own account for substituting it with 'Indian' was to accept the notion of medieval India as a nation state which, to me, is a modern construct. As the structures of the family life of the Muslims and Hindus appears to overlap, information bearing upon it has been drawn indiscriminately, without qualifying on dividing lines. There is no glossary but an Urdu or a Hindi term has been explained when first used.

I am not unaware of the many shortcomings of this work, primarily owing to the limitations of evidence: not abundant enough for a definitive study, nor too meagre for a preliminary glimpse of the world I have sought to explore. Perhaps it may serve as a stable ground for further explorations in the years to come.

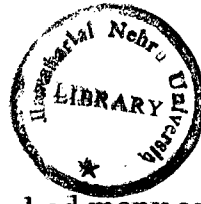
Topography

I

The Backdrop

The eighteenth century citizen of Shahjahanabad might have looked upon his city as one in which a range of experiences were involved. He would have imagined its life as one going far back into antiquity, to the times of the *Mahabharatha*. When the elders of his household recounted tales of the epic battle his heart would have swelled knowing that he was born in the capital of its great heroes, the Pandavas. When he heard them recite the bardic exploits of *Prithviraj Raso* his spirits would have soared knowing that his city had once been chivalrous. And a golden past would have transmuted into a heroic past before his eyes. When our citizen left the walls of his own Delhi and wandered about in its suburbs he would have encountered ruins of empires and kingdoms from the distant and not so distant times. He would have seen remains of the capital cities that rose here ~~one after another, and of dynasties that fell in like succession.~~ Their decaying walls, citadels, temples, mosques and tombs would have impressed upon him the extraordinary political power his city had beheld since ages. Its ability to re-invent itself down the centuries lay before him. The ruins would have evoked the wrath of invaders which was its bane time and again, and a touch of the tragic would have bestowed upon it a history that was glorious and moving. The ramblings of our *Dilliwalah*¹, however, would scarcely have been complete had he missed on paying homage to one of the many *dargahs* (shrines) that quietly dotted its vast suburbs. A sentiment of profound reverence for his *Hazrat-i Dehli* (Respected Delhi) would

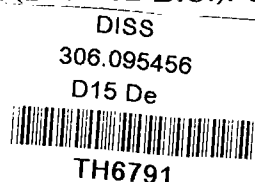
1. Delhi has two vernacular appellations *Dehli* and *Dilli*. While the former seems to have come up with the 'Muslim' rule, the latter is of indigenous origin. I have used the term *Dilliwalah* for the city's inhabitants because, as revealed in the Urdu poetry of eighteenth century, the city was *Dilli* to them rather than the external extract *Dehli*.



have swept through him. Yet the city for him had many contemporary gifts. It was the abode of the emperors and their households. They had made it beautiful with many splendid monuments, mosques, pavilions, *serais*, enchanting gardens, retreats and water-courses. They had laid enticing bazaars that displayed goods from exotic lands. Their courtiers had embellished it with gracious mansions (*mahals/havelis*). It was a hub of artists, musicians, scholars, poets and mystics. Above all it was famous all over the 'world'.

The real or imagined greatness of Delhi sets off the historian to investigate it and, simultaneously, reflect upon the motivations impelling Shahjahan to found the capital of his own empire here once he had decided to shift it from Agra. The history of the city does go into antiquity, as a settlement though and not as a capital. The first evidence of settled habitation in the area dates to c.1000 B.C.

where excavations in 1955 turned up painted grey ware pottery. Popular tradition has identified this as the site of Indraprastha, the capital of Pandavas. However the 'suggestive' nature of the available evidences refrains Stephen P. Blake from making any such claim and considering it the first city of the area. Settlements, nonetheless, continued to come up at the site of Delhi. Excavations of a stratum containing northern black polished ware and punch-marked coins, dated c.300 B.C., is evidence of one during the Mauryan period (322-185 B.C). Infact, the discovery on a rock in the nearby hills of a shorter version of the Minor Rock Edicts establishes a definite link between the area and the great Mauryan emperor Ashoka (269-232 B.C.). Coins, pottery, terra-cotta sealings and figurines indicate



TH-6791

settlements during the Sunga (c.185-173 B.C.), Kushana (c.A.D.48-220), Gupta (c.A.D. 320-510), post-Gupta (c.A.D.500-700), Rajput (c.A.D.700-1200), and Sultanate (A.D.1206-1526) periods.²

The history of the city as a capital, however, can be chronologically situated from the end of the first millennium A.D. when a clan of Rajputs, the Tomars, settled in the area. From this time onwards Delhi became the capital of a series of dynasties which ruled over northern India. The status was however interrupted in 1506 when Sikander Lodhi (r.1489-1517) in order to govern more effectively made Agra his headquarters. It was given back to Delhi, if only briefly, by Humayun (r.1530-56) after whose death it was again lost; the Emperor's successors, Akbar (r.1556-1605) and Jahangir (r.1605-27), ruling their empire from, once again, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri (in case of Akbar), and Lahore. It was not until 1639, when Shahjahan (r.1627-1658) founded Shahjahanabad, that Delhi regained its position and was never to lose it until the middle ages gave way to the colonial regime. Thus there were long spells when Delhi did not enjoy the status of a capital city. It must be pointed out that whatever the capital of the Mughals was the actual capital became wherever the emperor and his court happened to be currently located. Hence for considerable stretches of time their capitals were the mobile imperial camps organized, as strategy demanded, anywhere in the country to cope with threats and challenges from regions around.

However, the history of Shahjahanabad itself was pretty chequered. Having inaugurated it in 1648, Shahjahan was to barely stay for a few years when his illness took him to the palace-fortress at Agra only to be confined, until death, within its walls by Aurangzeb, his usurper son. Aurangzeb (r.1658-1707), on the

2. The oft-recounted history of the city has been taken from its most recent and well-researched study of Stephen P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639-1739*, Cambridge, 1991, pp.6-7.

other hand, divided the first twenty-two years of his reign between Delhi and Agra and spent the subsequent part (1681-1707) in waging wars in the Deccan with Rajputs, southern Muslims, and Marathas. He was to die at Aurangabad and buried there. His son, Bahadur Shah (r.1707-12), was not only crowned outside Agra but never entered the city during his brief rule, being compelled to govern the country from his mobile camps whilst died at Lahore. Thus for over twenty-six years 'the capital' remained without a ruler. It was from Jahandar Shah's reign (r.1712-13) onwards that Delhi was to have the emperors reside regularly (Farukh Siyar, r.1713-19; Muhammad Shah, r.1719-48; Ahmad Shah, r.1748-54; Alamgir II, r.1754-59) when the exile of Shah Alam (r.1759-1806) again bereft it of them for about thirteen years (r.1759-72). Shah Alam was to return here and the emperors did not leave it (Akbar Shah II, r.1806-37; Bahadur Shah II, r.1837-57) until the latter, the last of them, departed to a British imposed exile. But, then, by the reigns of the later Mughals the empire had become gradually a kingdom and the emperors pensionaries, first of the Marathas (1785-1803), and then of the British (1803-57). Thus Delhi rose to prominence in the lives of the Mughals when they had become a mere apparition of their former glory. That it remained intact despite the emperors' long absences meant that the Mughal capital was not merely a camp or a courtly city.³ Infact its allure was so strong that Bahadur Shah proclaimed an order prohibiting those in the army from visiting it without permission.⁴

3. Percival Spear has asserted that the Mughal capital was a camp or a courtly city. Spear, 'Mughal Delhi and Agra', in Arnold Toynbee, ed., *Cities of Destiny*, London, 1967, pp.235, 237-8, 241.

4. Satish Chandra, 'Cultural and Political Role of Delhi, 1675-1725', in Frykenberg, ed., *Delhi Through the Ages*, p.206.

In the long history of Delhi as settlement and as capital much building activity was undertaken causing considerable consternation to the historian who wishes to identify the cities that were founded here. Blake has researched it extensively and, distinguishing sites not readily identifiable, palaces or palace-complexes, temporary settlements or local headquarters from cities proper, identified them as under:

	Name	Builder	Dynasty	Date
1.	Lal Kot	Anang Pal	Tomar Rajputs	c.1052 A.D.
2.	Qila Rai Pithora	Prithviraj or Rai Pithora (c. 1170-92)	Chauhan Rajputs	c.1180 A.D.
3.	Siri	Ala al-Din Khalji (1296-1316)	Khalji Turks (1290-1321)	c. 1303
4.	Tuglaqabad	Ghias al-Din Tuglaq (1321-25)	Tuglaq Turks (1321-1414)	c. 1321
5.	Jahanpanah	Muhammad bin Tuglaq (1325-51)	Tuglaq Turks	c. 1325
6.	Firuzabad	Firuz Shah Tuglaq (1351-88)	Tuglaq Turks	c. 1354
7.	Din Panah	Humayun (1530-55)	Mughals (1526-1739)	c. 1533
8.	Sherghah	Sher Shah (1540-45)	Sur Afghans (1540-55)	c. 1540
9.	Shahjahanabad	Shahjahan (1627-58)	Mughals	1639
10.	New Delhi	Lord Hardinge (1910-16)	British (1803-1947)	1911 ⁵

Thus the political history of Delhi belongs to the medieval period, and was essentially of Muslim dynasties. Lal Kot (Red Fort) is the first identifiable city with

5. The table has been taken from Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City*, p.7.

remains substantial and extensive enough to be called one [Refer Map I]. Qila Rai Pithora (Fort of Rai Pithora) was built by Prithviraj by expanding the Lal Kot. He raised a great wall that enclosed the old city and a much larger area. The city was built in response to attacks by Muhammad Ghuri from the north-west. Interestingly, Qila Rai Pithora served as the headquarters for the Muslim rulers who succeeded the Rajputs until Sultan Ala al-Din Khilji built Siri, the first complete Muslim city of the area.⁶ North of the old capital, Siri began as a military camp to cope with the threat of Mongol invasions from Central Asia. Having successfully defended the area Ala al-Din walled the camp and ordered the building of permanent structures. Tuglaqabad (Abode of the Tuglaqs) lay 8 km east of Qila Rai Pithora and was a fortified city. It was divided into a citadel or palace-fortress for the ruler, his family, and retainers; an area for the houses of nobles and others; and a business-commercial sector. In one corner of it Muhammad bin Tuglaq, Ghias al-Din's successor, built a citadel named Adilabad (Abode of Justice). Jahanpanah (World's Refuge) was a walled enclosure constructed around the suburbs separating Qila Rai Pithora and Siri. It was a response to the Mongols who had plundered this area several times. It soon became a thriving centre of urban life. Firuzabad (Abode of Firuz) was founded in an area remote from the southern sites of the previous centres. Situated on the banks of river Jamuna, the city is said to have covered an area as large as twelve miles in diameter and included the entire site of what was to be Shahjahanabad, for which it was also to serve as a quarry. Kotla Firuz Shah (Citadel of Firuz Shah), the residential place of the Sultan, is one of the few substantial structures remaining.

6. Though Kaiqubad, successor of Balban, built Kailughari and resided in it the political functions of Qila Rai Pithora remained intact. The Sultan's successor, Jalal al-Din Khalji (r.1290-6), soon after crowning himself at Kailughari, formally moved back to Qila Rai Pithora.

Din Panah (Refuge of Religion) was a modest city built on the banks of Jamuna using bricks and stone from the remains of Siri. No trace of it remains since Sher Shah Sur, Humayun's successor, plundered and razed it. Shergah (Sher's Place) was located near the Din Panah and appears to have covered a considerable area. It had the citadel of Sher Shah — later known as Purana Qila (the Old Fort) — which contained a mosque and the fateful tower from which Humayun tumbled to his death soon after re-capturing the city. Salim Shah (r. 1545-55), Sher Shah's son and successor, built a citadel called Salimgarh (Salim's Fortress) north of Shergah, on the banks of Jamuna, which was to play an important role in the lives of the Mughal emperors. Shahjahanabad (Abode of Shahjahan) was the last medieval city to have been raised in the Delhi area.⁷

What was so important about the site of Delhi that one ruler after another made it the centre of his political power? A look at the map of North India shows that it offered critical geo-political advantages. Located at a point where the broad corridor of the riverine plains of northern India narrows down and runs upward, it connected the mountains and passes of the north-west with the rest of Hindustan. South-west of it opened the deserts and turbulent hills of Rajputana, leading on to the prosperous Gujrat and the sea beyond. Routes providing access to the well-endowed tracts of Malwa and Central India, and beyond to the Deccan, lie in the immediate south. In the east are the lush areas of the Gangetic plains, extending into lush Bengal. These tracts unfold far and wide with no natural obstacle until the river Indus is reached in the west, and the river Narmada and the hills of Vindhya in the south. It happens, then, that Delhi was a pivot which put a ruler in a masterly strategic position. From here he could exercise vigilance over internal foes, frustrate designs of external invaders, garner resources from

7. The political history of Delhi has been taken from *ibid.*, pp.9-13.

the areas around and deploy them in various directions. Thus Delhi was the last post of defence against invaders marching from the north-west, and the entry point into the rich and fabled land of the Ganges. It may well be that *Dehli*, the city's medieval appellation, signified *dehlij* — the threshold!

The founding of successive capitals in a triangle of 60 sq.miles also has a strategic explanation. Bounded by the Aravalli hills on the west and south, and the river Jamuna on the east, it provided immediate protection to the powers that were. Sustenance was obtained from a prosperous hinterland, navigating the Jamuna, and easy communication with the immense tracts around. Delhi's location, however, could not entirely secure it from external invasions and internal attacks. The early decades of the Sultanate witnessed savage raids by the Mongols, at times right into the city. In 1398-99 it fell on especially hard times when Timur, the great Central Asian warrior-ruler, plundered, sacked, and burnt it. Durable security to the city came only in the heyday of the Mughal empire. As the empire lay shattered in the first half of the eighteenth century invaders once again renewed the old history of invasions. Nadir Shah who raided and plundered it in 1739 was in many ways re-enacting events which had been its fate for centuries, just as the attacks by the Rohillas and Jats were their domestic replays. And yet medieval Delhi was lavished with immense affection by its rulers and subjects alike!

If the documented political history of Delhi was punctuated, the imagined history of the city saw Delhi as always the capital. It is this metaphorical perception of the city which is historically significant, for, Delhi represented political leadership to the dynasties which ruled over northern India. To the medieval rulers, especially, it was a centre of Muslim power, and in the background of its historical heritage, it became a potent symbol of legitimate rulership. This emerges forcefully from the recognition it was accorded during the interregnums

when it was not the capital viz. 1506-1530 and 1566-1639. The Lodhi Afghans, though governing from Agra, chose to build their tombs in the old capital emphasizing, thereby, its political significance as the last refuge of dynasties, particularly Muslim, and their own abandonment of it as merely temporary. After defeating Ibrahim Lodhi it was from Delhi that Babur had the *khutba* read⁸ and formally assumed the sovereignty of Hindustan. He remarks in his memoirs: 'Delhi is held to be the capital of the whole of Hindustan.'⁹ Abul Fazl, the chief ideologue of Akbar's state, referring to the city in *Akbar-Namah* as *pa-i takht Hindustan* (the site of Hindustan's throne)¹⁰ and *dar al-Mulk* (Seat of the empire)¹¹, articulated the position it enjoyed officially during the great emperor's reign. European sources reflect the contemporary attitude towards it. Jahangir's rule saw an English visitor, William Hawkins, to the Mughal court who described Delhi as: '(t)he chiefe citie or seate royall of the Kings of India... where hee (Jahangir) is established king, and... all the rites touching his coronation are performed.'¹² The report of John Jourdain, also English, that the Emperor kept the city in good repair because of its position as a former capital and as the birth-place of emperors¹³ underlines its confirmation by the Mughal as the seat of rulership. De Laet, the Dutch traveller who also visited the city during this time, underscored its political symbolism when he commented: 'It used to be regarded a religious duty that the

8. Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur, *Babur-Namah*, tr. A.S. Beveridge, reprint, Delhi, 1989, p.476.

9. *Ibid.*, p.481.

10. Abul Fazl, *Akbar-Namah*, tr. H. Beveridge, 3 vols., reprint, Delhi, 1989, 1, p.634.

11. *Ibid.*, 3, p.322.

12. Hawkins in William Foster, ed., *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*, reprint, Delhi, 1985, p.100.

13. William Foster, ed., *The Journal of John Jourdain: 1608-1617*, ed. William Foster, Cambridge, 1905, p.164.

during the ritual imperial visits to the city.¹⁸ Verily enough it was called 'the original home and source of the Mogol Monarchy.'¹⁹ By making Delhi the capital of his empire, Shahjahan formally placed himself in the land richly endowed with Mughal dynastic heritage.

The history of Delhi as a political capital had the corollary of converting it into a renowned centre of religion and pilgrimage in medieval times. As the history belonged essentially to rulers who were formally Muslims, the religious fame of the city rested upon Islam. Saints, mystics, and holymen following the powers that were settled and made it an abode of their preachings. Its saints Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki (d.1236), Nizam al-Din Auliya (d.1325), and Nasir al-Din Mahmud *Chirag-i Dehli* (d.1356) were particularly celebrated. During their life-time pilgrims from far and near flocked to their *khanqahs* (hospices). Upon death their graves became shrines and acquired a cult status. The celebration of their *urs* (birth anniversary) were occasions when devotees thronged them. The city had graves (*mazaars*) of saints with lesser lustre.²⁰ In late seventeenth century Sujjan Rai wrote in his *Khulasat al-Tawarikh*: 'There are so many saints' tombs... that their number can not be expressed in writing.'²¹ In the *Muraqqa-i Dehli* of Dargah Quli Khan is also documented the plenty and a visual illustration obtained of the profound significance they had in the religious life of the eighteenth century inhabitant of Shahjahanabad. Then, in the city's suburbs lay tombs and mausoleums of such rulers which possessed a divinity in the eyes of its dwellers.

18. See *ibid*.

19. Sebastien Manrique, *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643*, tr. C.E. Luard and H. Hosten, 2 vols., Oxford, 1927, 2, p.180.

20. This information has been drawn from various articles in Christian W. Troll, ed., *Muslim Shrines in India*, Delhi, 1992.

21. Jadunath Sarkar, tr., *The India of Aurangzeb with Extracts from The Khulasat al-Tawarikh and The Chahar Gulshan*, Calcutta, 1902, p.10.

From early on Delhi possessed a sanctity. A thirteenth century Persian poet, Siraj Khurasani, attached to its court considered it a 'blessed city' (*نجسته شهر*).²² A poem attributed to the famed Amir Khusrau has the poet describing it as the 'centre of Islam in the world' whose devotee even Mecca would become.²³ Abul Fazl referred to it as 'the holy territory',²⁴ and Jahangir called it 'the abode of blessings'.²⁵ To Chaturman Rai, a mid-eighteenth century historian, it was 'one of the old holy places'.²⁶ To Girdhar Das, who translated *Ramayan* into Persian in the reign of Muhammad Shah, it was a 'sacred territory'.²⁷ And, of course, for the city's citizens it was the *Hazrat-i Dehli*. By founding his capital at Delhi, a religious centre of Islam, Shahjahan bestowed upon his state a legitimacy. Drawing from the city religious or spiritual power for political reasons the Mughals, during their ritual visits to it, paid homage to its celebrated shrines.²⁸

It was the city's traditional — political and religious — identification with legitimate rulership which, in J.F. Richards opinion, Akbar sought to break when he located his capital at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri and not at Delhi:

For two and a half centuries Delhi had been the unassailable redoubt, the refuge for Indian Muslims and seat of the Sultans of Hindustan. By moving first from Delhi to Agra, and later to his own capital at Fatehpuri Sikri Akbar reduced existing associations of

-
22. I.H. Siddiqui, 'Historical Information in the Thirteenth Century Collections of Persian Poems', *Studies in Islam*, January/April, 1982, p.60.
 23. Amir Khusrau, *Qiran-us-Sadain*, ed. Muhammad Muqtada Khan Sherwani, Aligarh, 1918, 1st edn., 1885, pp.28-9.
 24. Abul Fazl, *Akbar-Namah*, 2, p.70.
 25. Nur al-Din Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, tr. Alexander Rogers, ed. H. Beveridge, 2 vols., reprint, Delhi, 1989, 2, p.108.
 26. Chaturman Rai, *Chahar Gulshan*, Persian Manuscript Collection, British Museum (BM), London, Or. 1791, f.33b.
 27. Girdhar Das, tr., *Ramayan*, Bibliotheque Nationale (Paris) Manuscripts Persans, no.221, Code: Supplement IP, F.227b.
 28. See Koch, 'The Delhi of the Mughals'.

legitimate rulership with Delhi. Neither Akbar, nor a possible rebel henceforth could easily claim the imperial throne by virtue of possession of the citadels, the palaces, or the active support of the volatile population of the old imperial city.²⁹

That the Emperor still paid ritual visits to the city reflects how little conviction his action carried. Shahjahan, however, formally reversed the decision of his grandfather.

The twin significance of Delhi made it the *axis mundi* — the centre of earth and the intersect of the celestial and of the mundane — as a capital ideally was in pre-modern civilizations such as the Mughals.³⁰ In his poem Amir Khusrau considers the city ‘a place of faith and justice’ and ‘the meeting point of heaven and earth.’³¹ The official historian of Shahjahan’s reign, Muhammad Salih, wrote: ‘Its four walls... enclosed the centre of the earth (*markaz-i khak*)’.³² Hakim Maharat Khan Isfahani, author of an early eighteenth century geographical work, remarked: (It) was always the *dar al-Mulk* of the great sultans and the centre of the circle of Islam (*markaz-i dairah-i Islam*).³³ And Ghulam Muhammad Khan, a visitor towards the end of the century, described it as ‘the guardian of religion and

29. J.F. Richards, *Power, Administration, and Finance in Mughal India*, Aldershot, 1993, p.255.

30. For a discussion of the concept of *axis mundi* and the medieval capital see Paul Wheatley, ‘What the Greatness of a City is Said to be, *Pacific Viewpoint*, 4, 1963, p.179.

31. Khusrau, *Qiran-us-Sadain*, pp.29-30.

32. Muhammad Salih Kambo Lahauri, *Bahar-i Sukhan*, Persian Manuscript Collection, BM, London, Or. 178, f.203b.

33. Hakim Maharat Khan Isfahani, *Bahjat al-Alam*, Persian Manuscript Collection, India Office Library (IOL), London, Ethe. 729, f.34a.

justice.³⁴ By choosing it as the site of his Shahjahanabad, Shahjahan met the ideals laid for a capital city by the medieval society; the ideals however represented the Muslim populace.

Delhi's eminence as a capital and religious centre had bestowed upon it other endowments. The edifices raised by successive dynasties excited the poetical spirit of Amir Khusrau:

The buildings of this city are beyond description
They are known for greatness in the entire world.³⁵

Ibn Batuta, the Moorish traveller visiting it in 1333-4, described it as 'a vast and magnificent city, combining beauty and strength.'³⁶ Father Monserrate passing through in 1581 found it magnificent with remarkable public buildings and many fine private mansions, the streets 'more imposing and impressive than in other Musalman towns... planted down the middle with beautiful green trees', the parks and gardens, lovely, 'filled with a rich profusion of fruits and flowers'.³⁷ Drawn by the patronage offered by the Court scholars, poets, musicians and artists from the country and abroad had made it a great centre of culture and learning. As early as 1236 A.D. the historian Minhaj bin Siraj wrote: 'This city... became the retreat and resting place for the learned, the virtuous, and the excellent of the various parts of the world...'³⁸ Recalling it from the Deccan, where the 'turmoils' of the eighteenth

34. Ghulam Muhammad Khan, *Navad al-Qisas*, Persian Manuscript Collection, BM, London, Or. 1866, f.15b.

35. Khusrau, *Qiran-us-Sadain*, p.30-1.

36. Ibn Batuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-54*, London, 1983, 1st pub. 1929, p.194.

37. Antonio Monserrate, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate S.J.*, tr. J.S. Hoyland, Oxford, 1922, pp.95-8.

38. Al Minhaj bin Siraj, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, in H.K. Kaul, ed., *Historic Delhi: An Anthology*, Delhi, 1985, p.1.

century had forced him to settle, the poet Basti wrote in his *masnavi*: 'Delhi was such a well-settled city; that it was the envy of Egypt and exceeded Bagdad in dignity.'³⁹

Its varied accomplishments; the city had acquired a mystique, an aura, a fame. According to the medieval convention of ultimate praise it was a paradise. Says Siraj Khurasani:⁴⁰

دلیک دہلی گرنی المثل بہشت شود

Dehli was a veritable paradise⁴¹

Says Amir Khusrau: 'In qualities and virtues, it is like paradise'; 'It is like Eden'.⁴²

The poet could even go over-board: 'the seven domes of heaven are nothing in comparison to it.'⁴³ A mid-seventeenth century historian, Chander Bhan Brahmin, called it 'a veritable heaven on earth.'⁴⁴ And Shahjahan, its founder, intended it to be one. The tradition of perceiving the city as a paradise came full circle when the thirteenth century verse of Amir Khusrau was easily transcribed on what was supposed to be its most splendid edifice:

اگر فردوس بر روی زمین است
 بہمین است و بہمین است و بہمین است
 If there be a paradise on the face of the earth
 It is here, it is here, it is here.

39. Basti, "Masnavi-i Basti", ed. Yunus Jaffery, in *Qand-i Parsi*, Iranian Culture Centre, Delhi, 1992, 4, p.159.
40. The use of the appellation *Dehli* in the thirteenth century as against *Dilli* by the eighteenth century poets reflects that over the centuries the sensibilities of the city's poets had rooted in the indigenous environment.
41. Siddiqui, 'Historical Information in the Thirteenth Century', p.60.
- 42.-43. Khusrau, *Qiran-us-Sadain*, pp.54-5, 30-1.
44. Chander Bhan Brahmin, *Chahar Chaman Brahman*, Persian Manuscript Collection, IOL, London, Ethe 2093, f.51b.

However the Emperor's city was 'ravaged', and Basti looked back nostalgically: 'Delhi of my days was like a paradise'; 'It had many greater qualities that it has now'.⁴⁵ But to the visitor, Ghulam Muhammad Khan, it remained 'a garden of Eden that is populated'.⁴⁶

Less formally it was Abul Fazl's 'wondrous city of Delhi'.⁴⁷ Basti could perceive glory in it, even during decline: 'Delhi has such an attractive flavour; It is unparalleled in every state; Its glory remains intact even in its decline; If it has lost the status of the king, it possesses *faqiri*',⁴⁸ where '*faqiri*' (impoverishment) is associated with the elegance of austerity. To Ghulam Husain Khan, otherwise a historian of the Mughal decline, Delhi was the 'glory of the cities of Hindustan'.⁴⁹ More intimately, it was the people's *shahr*, and the poet's sweetheart (*دلربا*).⁵⁰ Says Basti: 'Delhi is like Laila to me and I its Majnu; ...Delhi is like Laila and I am its Farhad (sic!); I place the memory of it in my bosom; Delhi is like the lamp and I its moth; Delhi is like the wilds and I its lover; ...I play the games of love with Delhi; my heart burns at my separation from her.'⁵¹ The 'tragedies' that were inflicted upon it were a despoliation of Mir Dard's beloved's 'fair face'.

The laying of Shahjahanabad passionately involved its creator who wished to distinguish himself from his predecessors this way and leave upon his era a lasting mark. It is Shahjahan's this enterprise which has identified Delhi with the Mughals, and the Mughals with Delhi. The Emperor's love for orderliness made it

45. Basti, "Masnavi", p.158.

46. Ghulam Muhammad Khan, *Navad al-Qisas*, f.15b.

47. Abul Fazl, *Akbar-Namah*, 2, p.104.

48. Basti, "Masnavi", p.179.

49. Syed Ghulam Husain Khan, *Seir Mutaqherin*, tr. M.Raymond also known as Haji Mustafa, 4 vols., reprint, Delhi, 1990, 1, p.1.

50. Siddiqui, 'Historical Information in the Thirteenth Century', p.60.

51. Basti, "Masnavi", p.154.

the first planned city of India, after of course Mohanjodaro. Built at a time when the empire was at the height of its expansion, wealth, and arts it was executed as a grand aesthetic exercise. It was meant to be its ceremonial headquarters where the power and dominance of the Mughal state were ritually demonstrated. It may therefore be said that Shahjahanabad was a gateway to the Empire.

II Layout

ہفت اقلیم ہر گلی ہے کہیں

دلی سے بھی دیار ہوتے ہیں

The seven climes chant in every lane
Does Delhi have its equal anywhere?
(Mir Taqi Mir, 1722-1810)

'At about one o'clock in the morning I looked out of my palanquin, and saw in the glorious moonlight the minarets of the Juma Musjid, the great Mohammedan mosque... . As we got nearer I could see the wonderful red walls that surround the city... . It was the most marvellous moonlight I have ever seen, and we crossed the river, the view in both directions with this magnificent city lying before us, was quite wonderful, so, many exquisite minarets towering up into the sky...'

(Reminiscence of Emily Metcalfe, daughter of Thomas Metcalfe, British Resident at Delhi (1835-53), approaching her father's home after residence in England).⁵²

The city of Shahjahanabad could be entered by any one of its seven well-guarded

52. M.M. Kaye, ed., *The Golden Calm: An English Lady's Life in Moghul Delhi*, Exter, 1980, p.122.

gates.⁵³ If one were to enter from the Lahori Gate one would have been on the main street of the city. This was a gracious avenue built by Shahjahan's talented daughter, Jahan-Ara, in 1650. Measuring 1520 yards in length and 40 yards in width, it had a stone-lined canal called the *Nahr-i Bihisht* (Stream of Paradise) flowing through its centre. On either side of the canal grew large shady trees. Bending briefly at the beginning, and modulated by *chawks* (squares), the street ran straight and terminated in the Lahori Gate of the palace-fortress [Refer Map II]. In this way it divided the city into two unequal halves.

The street was the principal commercial area of the city and served essentially its elite strata. Arcaded shops and porticoes numbering 1560, having the dwellings of merchants on top and warehouses behind, ran on either side of it. Bazaars were spread across its entire length, and dividing into sections, defined the street which to begin with had no single name. From the gate of the city-wall to 560 yards was the Fatehpuri Bazaar so called after a mosque that lay at its head. Lack of a specific name, and of information on any particular feature, indicate that the bazaar was of general importance. It met in one of the *chawks* of the street. From this *chawk* to 480 yards was the *Jauhari* Bazaar (Jeweller's Market) or the *Ashrafi* Bazaar (Money Dealers' Market). This was the financial sector of the city. It met in another *chawk* of the street. From here began the Urdu Bazaar (Military

53. Set at regular intervals the city-wall was intercepted by seven principal gates (*darwazas*) namely Kashmiri, Mori, Kabuli, Lahori, Ajmeri, Turkman, and Akbarabadi. It had three other gates intercepting the wall fronting the river: Raj Ghat, and Qila Ghat, Nigambodh Ghat. These were used by the Hindu inhabitants of the city to reach the Jamuna and take ritual baths and perform many sacred ceremonies. Interspersed between the principal gates were small entryways (*khirkis*) which allowed quick and easy passage to pedestrians.

Market), covering a distance of 480 yards. As the name indicates it was a specialized market of military wares. It ended in a *chawk* which lay outside the Lahori Gate of the palace-fortress.⁵⁴

Meant to architecturally modulate the street, each *chawk* otherwise possessed an identity. The one between the Fatehpuri Bazaar and the *Jauhari/Ashrafi* Bazaar was considered the most beautiful in the city. Known as the *Chandni Chawk* (Moonlight Square) it was octagonal in shape and measured 100 yards x 100 yards. A large pool rested in its middle.⁵⁵ The glow of the *chawk* from the radiance of the moonlight shining on the waters of its pool gave it its beautiful name, for, the brightness of the Indian moon is the stuff of the land's poetry and folklore; it had so enraptured the Europeans as well. Of all the bazaars in the city the *Chandni Chawk* was the most decorated. It was a gallery of rarities. Shops sold varieties of precious stones, fabrics, arms, perfumes and china-wares belonging to different parts of the world. They carried exquisite looking *hookahs*, flasks, wine-cups, bowls, and other exotic items — all arrayed so beautifully as to entice the customers. Pedlars displayed such attractive fabrics on their shoulders and arms that beat the ones carried in proper shops. Salesman bade their products in loud rhythmic voices. How costly were the wares? — Dargah Quli Khan has an interesting anecdote to narrate. It so happened that the son of a deceased noble wished to visit the *chawk*. His mother, expressing regret over the insufficiency of

54. Muhammad Salih Kambo Lahauri, *Amal-i Salih*, ed. and annotated by G. Yazdani, revised by Wahid Quraishi, 3 vols., Lahore, 1967-72, 3, pp.36-8; Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat-i Dar al-Hukumat-i Dihli*, 3 vols., mimeo, Delhi, 1990, 2, pp.205-6; Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar al-Sanadid*, ed. Khaliq Anjum, 3 vols., Delhi, 1990, 1, p.289; Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire 1656-1668*, tr. Irving Brock, ed. Archibald Constable, reprint, Delhi, 1989, p.245.

55. Muhammad Salih, *Amal*, 3, p.37; Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar*, 1, p.289; Mirza Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, tr. Sharif Husain Qazmi, Delhi, 1983, p.180.

her means, gave him one lakh of rupees and apologized that though the rarities may be beyond his reach, he would at least be able to buy some necessities of his liking! The narration of the anecdote is not without a juicy hyperbole, but it does seem to suggest the bazaar's fancy reputation where spending any amount of money would never have been a problem. At the *chawk* were *Qahwa Khanahs* (Coffee Houses) where poets and wits gathered everyday. In the evenings the scene which met one's eye was kaleidoscopic and particularly colourful. The *chawk* was a place of enjoyment for pleasure-seekers and high nobles, oblivious of their status, came for a stroll.⁵⁶ Its popularity is reflected in that, over the years the entire street, from the Lahori Gate of the city-wall to the Lahori Gate of the palace-fortress, came to be known as the *Chandni Chawk* as it is today.

The *chawk* that lay between the *Jauhari/Ashrafi Bazaar* and the Urdu Bazaar was distinguished as the *Kotwali Chabutra* or the City Magistrate's Platform. Measuring 80 yards x 80 yards, here, in the midst of the bazaar for all to see, the criminals were tried and even sent to the gallows.⁵⁷

The *chawk* outside the Lahori Gate of the palace-fortress was really a royal square. Here camped the Rajput *amirs* and their troops while standing guard on duty, and hither appeared the nobles when repairing to attend the general audiences of the emperor. The splendour of their attire and the mount, the paraphernalia accompanying them, made the *chawk* during these hours a place before which nothing could be 'conceived much more brilliant'. Grooms from the imperial household exercised the horses, and officials from the *bakhshi's* office reviewed the contingents of the newly admitted *mansabdars* here. Besides, the *chawk* was a rendezvous for all sorts of jugglers and mountebanks. Astrologers

56. Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa*, pp.128-9.

57. Muhammad Salih, *Amal*, 3, p.37; Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat*, 2, pp.214-5; Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar*, 1, p.289.

could be found seated on dusty carpets with an old mathematical instrument, an astrolabe, and a book of horoscopes open. Women shrouded in white from head to toe were their special clients and whispered them secrets of their lives. A bazaar selling an endless variety of things was also held.⁵⁸

The main street of Shahjahanabad was embellished with architectural pieces built by members of the imperial household. At the head was a well-proportioned red sandstone mosque graced by a dome and two minarets. A platform with a pool of water meant for ablution before offering prayer lay in the vast courtyard leading upto the prayer halls. To the mosque were attached a *serai* for scholars and travellers and a *hammam* (bath-house). The entire complex was the work of Nawab Fatehpuri Begam, a concubine of Shahjahan and the mosque called after her was Fatehpuri Masjid.⁵⁹ At the *Chandni Chawk* was another complex of structures designed by Jahan-Ara, the builder of the street. The centrepiece was a *serai* called the *Begam ki Serai* which was located on the north-end of the *chawk*. Intended to be 'large and fine like no other in Hindustan', and inspired by a spirit that the 'wanderer who enters its courts will be restored in body and soul and my name will never be forgotten', the *serai*, after the palace-fortress and Jama'i Masjid, was the third major edifice in the city. Resting in a garden of pools, trees, flowers and water-channels, it was built in the shape of a large square and had two storeys. Below these were arcades which opened into ninety small chambers at their extremities. Above ran a gallery all the way around behind which were chambers in equal number as those below. The chambers, below and above, were beautifully painted and appointed and meant for the use of rich

58. Bernier, *Travels*, pp.243-4, 282.

59. Muhammad Salih, *Amal*, 3, p.38; Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat*, 2, pp.242-6; Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar*, 1, pp.348-9.

and privileged merchants.⁶⁰ To Manucci, it was 'the most beautiful *sarai* in Hindustan'⁶¹ and to Basti, the inhabitant of Shahjahanabad, it was 'in the nature of magic', it was 'like the soul of the city and the city was like its body.'⁶²

Behind the *serai* lay an enormous garden called *Sahibabad* (Abode of the Sahiba, i.e. Jahan-Ara Begam). Spread over an area of 50 acres it was the only garden of size within the city and outside the palace-fortress. Rectangular in shape, it resembled a large walled enclosure from outside. However, within, it was a retreat of fountains, pools, waterfalls, channels, flowers, trees with the *Nahr-i Bihisht* feeding the water-courses. Exquisite *baradaris* (summer houses) were set in the middle of the pools. The garden was an escape for the women and children of the imperial household from the blazing heat of the plains.⁶³ Opposite the *Sahibabad* and the *Begam ki Serai*, on the south-end of the *Chandni Chawk*, Jahan-Ara had built a *hammam*.⁶⁴

Gardens were spread adjacent to the *chawk* in which the main street met.

These were the *Anguri Bagh* (Grapes Garden), the *Gulab Bagh* (Rose Garden), and

60. Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, p.180; Andrea Butenschen, *The Life of a Mogul Princess, Jahan-Ara Begam, Daughter of Shahjahan*, London, 1931, p.30, in Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City*, p.66; Muhammad Salih, *Amal*, 3, p.37; Bernier, *Travels*, pp.280-1.

61. Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, tr. William Irvine, 4 vols., reprint, Delhi, 1990, 1, pp.212-3.

62. Basti, "Masnavi", p.150.

63. Muhammad Salih, *Amal*, 3, pp.37-8; Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, pp.180, 186; Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar*, 1, p.348.

64. Muhammad Salih, *Amal*, 3, p.38; Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, p.186.

the *Buland Bagh* (Lofty Garden). They formed a wide swathe of green which, according to Bernier, contrasted with the 'stupendous red walls' of the palace-fortress and produced a 'beautiful effect'.⁶⁵

This was the street as planned. As the city evolved it saw the addition of new features. In 1721-22 a mosque called the *Sonehri Masjid* (Golden Mosque) was built at the *Chandni Chawk*, opposite the *Begam ki Serai*, by Raushan al-Daula Zafar Khan, a powerful *amir* of the emperor Muhammad Shah, in honour of his spiritual mentor.⁶⁶ Its slender minarets rising above the roof line and the gilt metal-plated bulbous domes lent a delicate air to the skyline of Shahjahanabad.⁶⁷ It was from this mosque that Nadir Shah, on the morning of March 11th 1739, ordered the city peoples massacre, a bloodshed that lasted for about twelve hours.⁶⁸ The massacre caused a gate close-by to be called the *Khuni Darwaza* (Bloodshed Gate) which became an important feature of the street. The *Khuni Darwaza*, located to the east of the *Kotwali Chabutra*, opened behind into a large market called the Dariba Bazaar which spread upto the Jama'i Masjid.⁶⁹

65. Muhammad Salih, *Amal*, 3, pp.36-7; Muhammad Waris, *Padshah-Namah*, Persian Manuscript Collection, BM, London, Add. 6556, f.404; Bernier, *Travels*, p.243; Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, p.184.

66. Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, Cambridge, 1992, pp.296-8.

67. *Ibid.*, p.297, see pp.297-8.

68. *Ibid.*, p.301.

69. Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, pp.174, 184; H.C. Fanshawe, *Shahjahan's Delhi: Past and Present*, reprint, Delhi, 1979, p.49; Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat*, 2, pp.210, 212.

By the late eighteenth century, with the collapse of order and governance within the city, much of the organized charm of the street had been disturbed. Houses had been built across it and down the centre.⁷⁰ The *Nahr-i Bihisht* had run dry to be restored by the British in the following century.⁷¹

The urban plan of Shahjahanabad had laid out another main street which was located south of the palace-fortress and ran in a straight line from its Akbarabadi Gate to the Akbarabadi Gate of the city-wall. Built in 1650 by Nawab Akbarabadi Begam, another of Shahjahan's concubine, it resembled the principal street in every way, though the scale was less elaborate. Thus it took the shape of an avenue and had the *Nahr-i Bihisht*, with trees lining it, flowing through the middle. Measuring 1050 yards in length and 30 yards in width, it also was a main bazaar of the city having elite commercial value. Shops and porticoes numbering 888, with merchant's dwellings on top and warehouses behind, ran on its either side. To begin with the street was known after its founder as the Akbarabadi Bazaar⁷²; gradually it came to be called the *Faiz Bazaar* (Market of Plenty); and much later as the *Daryaganj* — a name which has stayed on.

Like the other street it too was embellished. A complex of edifices stood on the south of the Akbarabadi Gate of the palace-fortress. Built by the Begam it had a large mosque resembling the Fatehpuri Masjid in style. Formally called the *Ashat Panahi* (Great Protection), it was popularly referred to as the Akbarabadi Masjid. Attached to the mosque, as usual, were a *serai* and a *hammam*. In front of

70. Fanshawe, *Shahjahan's Delhi*, p.50.

71. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar*, 1, p.290.

72. Muhammad Salih, *Amal*, 3, p.38; Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat*, 2, pp.97,137-8; Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar*, 1, p.289; Bernier, *Travels*, p.245.

the complex lay a *chawk* which was 160 yards long and 60 yards wide.⁷³ Later, in the eighteenth century, the street was embellished by Raushan al-Daula Zafar Khan who put up strings of lights on both sides of its canal.⁷⁴ Two mosques, each known as *Sonehri Masjid* like an earlier one, were added to it. One was built in 1744-45 by, once again, Raushan al-Daula Zafar Khan and, once again, in honour of his spiritual mentor. It was located south of the Akbarabadi Gate of the palace-fortress, was surmounted by a metal-plated dome, and was solid yet austere in appearance as compared to the first.⁷⁵ The other *Sonehri Masjid* was built in 1750-51 by Qudsiya Begam, mother of emperor Ahmad Shah, and Javed Khan, a eunuch-noble reputed to be her paramour. It was also located south of the Akbarabadi Gate of the palace-fortress. Built of red sandstone it was small and delicate, flanked on either side by extremely tall minarets, and had metal-plated bulbous domes resting on top which lent the structure a grandiose air. The mosque was entered by a red carved stone gate.⁷⁶ The avenue however received a devastating blow, bewailed by a contemporary, when the rows of trees lining its canal were lopped off under the order of Jahandar Shah.⁷⁷

The two main streets met in the palace-fortress of the city.

The palace-fortress, the abode of the emperor and his household, was called the *Qila-i Mubarak* (Auspicious Fort). It was an awe-inspiring structure of red sandstone, occupying a bluff above the river Jamuna, catching its cooling breeze, and formed the eastern wall of the city. Taking the shape of an irregular octagon,

73. Muhammad Salih, *Amal*, 3, pp.38-9; Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat*, 2, pp.140-2; Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar*, 1, p.349.

74. In Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City*, p.56.

75. Asher, *Architecture*, pp.301-2.

76. *Ibid.*, p.304.

77. William Irvine, *Later Mughals*, reprint, Delhi, 1991, 1, p.194.

it enclosed an area of 124 acres and was surrounded by imposing ramparts. Running nearly two miles in circumference, the ramparts were serrated by battlements, and ranged in height from 75 feet on the landward side to 65 feet along the river-side, and in width from 45 feet at the base to 30 feet at the top. Four gateways, two small entry-ways, and twenty-one towers (seven round and fourteen octagonal) pierced them. The Lahori Gate [Refer Map III, no.1] and the Akbarabadi Gate (no.15), on the west and south, were the principal entrances which, to recall, opened into the main streets of the city. Of red sandstone, they were lofty in appearance and in front had a pair of life-size elephants, as if standing guard. Aurangzeb considering such images sacrilegious had them pulled down. He strengthened the outworks of the gates by putting up barbicans. The third gateway was towards the north and, being in the direction of the Salimgarh Fort, was called the Salimgarh Gate (no.16). The fourth was on the river-front, beneath the *Jharokhah-i Darshan* (Balcony of Audience, no.8), and meant only for the use of the emperor. One of the small entry-ways was on the north-eastern slant of the ramparts, between the Salimgarh Gate and the *Shah Burj* (King's Tower, no.12). The other was at the base of the palace - fortress, a few yards south of the *mahal* of Jahan-Ara Begam (no.6). A moat faced with rough hewn-stone, 30 feet deep and 75 feet wide, encircled the palace-fortress.

To understand the layout of the buildings within the palace-fortress one may reckon the north-south avenue running from the Akbarabadi Gate to the Salimgarh Gate as an axis. The rectangle to the east contained structures which had a public and private import. From here the emperor discharged his duties towards his subjects, and it was here that he and his household resided. Closer to the city-side, in touch with the populace, were the public buildings and, away from it, towards the river-side, in exclusivity, were the private buildings. Each building was placed along a courtyard, occupying one whole length, and surrounded by

arcaded chambers on other three sides, giving the appearance of a walled enclosure. The buildings were magnificent marbled pavilions, graced with domes on top and cusped arches in front, while resting on a row of baluster columns.

The *Daulat Khanah-i Khas o Am* (Hall of Public Audience, no.4) was meant for the emperor's daily public functions. Opposite it, on the other side of the courtyard, was the *Naqqar Khanah* (Drum House, no.3) which beat loud martial music during the audiences. Bernier found the music, of hautboys and cymbals, overpowering when hearing from near, but 'solemn, grand, and melodious' from a distance. The *Naqqar Khanah* served as the entry to the *Daulat Khanah-i Khas o Am* and etiquette required all, except the royal princes, to dismount their horses and walk when entering the precincts of the Fort proper. In the *Daulat Khanah-i Khas* (Hall of Private Audience, no.9) the private audiences of the emperor were held. Here, with the assistance of a few select and trusted advisors, he dealt with the most important and sensitive matters of state. The *Daulat Khanah-i Khas* and the *Daulat Khanah-i Khas o Am* were connected by a small entry-way known as the *Lal Purdah* (The Red Curtain). North of the *Daulat Khanah-i Khas* was the emperor's *hammam*. It was a three chambered structure meant respectively for dressing, hot bath, and cold bath. South of the *Daulat Khanah-i Khas* was the emperor's sleeping apartment called the *Khawabgah* (Abode of Dreams). Projecting from the eastern wall of the *Khawabgah* was the *Jharokhah-i Darshan* (no.8), an octagonal tower, where the emperor appeared grandly every morning to give audience to his subjects assembled below on the sandy bank of the Jamuna. The entire complex of the *Daulat Khanah-i Khas*, with the emperor's bath-house on one side and his sleeping apartment on the other, was known, rather intimately, as the *Ghisl Khanah* — literally the bath, but actually the locale of the emperor's consultations with a very few and most intimate counsellors. The location of the *Daulat Khanah-i Khas*, deep within the privacy of the emperor's bath-house and

his sleeping apartment, is suggestive. By allowing the nobles attending its audiences such intimacy, the emperor sought to bestow upon them an honour or distinction which was an informal way of regulating the social rank and dignity they otherwise enjoyed. It is interesting that as the state lost authority its emperor withdrew to the *Daulat Khanah-i Khas* and increasingly functioned from it instead of the *Daulat Khanah-i Khas o Am* pointing to a sharp contraction of the public space and a rule by a group of favourites. The Peacock Throne was also shifted accordingly.

South of the above complex lay the emperor's harem or the apartments of the imperial women. The largest of them was the *Imtiaz* or *Mumtaz Mahal* (The Distinguished Palace) which was a centre of their communal activity. The *mahal* of Jahan-Ara was another important structure; favourite of Shahjahan's children, upon the *begam* was bestowed the singular distinction of separate apartment. In the area was *Khwaspura* (Special Quarter) where the widows and dependents of former emperors dwelled.

On either corner of the edifices which spread along the river-front of the palace-fortress were two towers — the *Shah Burj* (King's tower, no.12) on the north-eastern corner, and the *Asad Burj* (Lion's Tower, no.5) on the south-eastern corner. Aurangzeb provided the Fort with a small, delicately wrought, marble mosque which was called the *Moti Masjid* (Pearl Mosque, no.11).

The edifices of the eastern rectangle in the palace fortress were sumptuous, artistic, and exquisitely executed. Their walls were carved intricately with floral sprays and fruit trees and studded with precious stones like agates, corals, pearls, etc. Their ceilings were painted brightly and were decorated with gold-inlay work. Delicate marble screens were placed here and there. The domes could be of pure gold. Of all the structures the most splendid was considered to be the *Daulat*

Khanah-i Khas o Am where these arts are found extravagantly displayed. Lanes between the structures could be paved with coloured stones. A channel of the *Nahr-i Bihisht*, with fountains shooting jets of water, wound through them.

Existence of more literal appellations for the above structures suggests that the palace-fortress gradually lost much of its formalism. Thus the *Daulat Khanah-i Khas o Am* came to be known less formidably as *Diwan-i-Am*, the *Imtiaz / Mumtaz Mahal* as *Rang Mahal* (Colourful Palace), the *Khawabgah* as *Aramgah* (Resting Place), and the *Jharokah-i Darshan* as simply *Mussaman Burj* (Hexagonal Tower), just as the *Sahibabad* came to be known more intimately as *Begam ka Bagh* and their *Nahr-i Bihisht* as, simply, *Faiz Nahr*.

Gardens had been spread in the palace-fortress. For the emperor was the *Hayat-Baksh Bagh* (Life Giving Garden) and the *Mahtab Bagh* (Moon Garden) which occupied a substantial part of the northern sector of the eastern rectangle. Of the two the *Hayat-Baksh Bagh* was larger and more elaborate. A large rectangular pool rested in its middle which, in turn, was graced by a *baradari* enveloped under sprays of forty-nine silver fountains. Around the pool another one hundred and twelve fountains sprayed water. Avenues led from the four sides of the pool and met in the surrounding wall. A channel containing thirty silver fountains flowed through the middle of each avenue. At the extremities of the north-south avenue were two *baradaris* made of marble, identical in appearance, and romantically named after the monsoon months of Hindustan — Sawan and Bhadaun. Flowers and fruit trees grew in great variety; the garden was wrapped in thick foliage. It is said that it had a menagerie of the emperor. The *Mahtab Bagh*, on the other hand, besides the flowers and trees, had a pool set with a red sandstone *baradari* called the *Balal Mahal* (Water Palace) through which a channel of the *Nahr-i Bihisht* flowed.

Gardens graced the apartments of the imperial women. They were spread in their courtyards, were of a small size, and dressed with pools, flowers, and trees.

West of the avenue, running from the Akbarbadi Gate to the Salimgarh Gate, was another rectangle which was smaller in size. This served the auxiliary functions of the palace-fortress. In the arcaded chambers, which lined either side of the avenue, resided the tax collectors, financial and military record keepers, clerks, and miscellaneous petty officers of the empire. In them were located the treasury and the mint; the *karkhanas* which manufactured the various luxury items required by the imperial households; the stores where clothing, victuals, books, candlesticks, etc. were kept; and the stables of the palace-fortress. Here resided, with their families, the soldiers, merchants, artisans, physicians, poets, scholars, religious specialists and astrologers attached to the imperial household.

A channel of the *Nahr-i Bihisht* flowed through the middle of the avenue. Along the western length of the *Naqqar Khanah* lay a courtyard called the *Jilau Khanah* which served as the forecourt of the palace-fortress. Here assembled and waited all those seeking audience of the emperor. In the arcaded chambers surrounding the courtyard were housed the *amirs* who stood on daily guard. In the south-west corner of the courtyard were several buildings where the *wazir* (superintendent) of the imperial household transacted business. A large rectangular pool decorated the courtyard.

Amongst the auxiliary functions contained in the western rectangle of the palace-fortress was a bazaar (no.2) which spread from its Lahori Gate to the western side of the *Jilau Khanah*. Unusual for Shahjahanabad, and even Hindustan, it was a covered market (*bazaar-i musaqaf*) which in the Islamic lands of Western Asia was quite common. A long vaulted aisle and noble in appearance, the bazaar had arcaded shops in two stories lined on its either side. They sold a

variety of goods and were thronged with buyers. *Qahwa Khanahs*, frequented by the *amirs*, were located amongst them. In the middle of the ceiling over the bazaar was an opening which let in air and light. A small open octagonal court finely carved with flowers and inscriptions from the Koran lay beneath.⁷⁸

Thus the palace-fortress was a city within a city.

In the century following its creation the palace-fortress lost much of its splendour bit by bit. There were the sacks of the city as a result of which it suffered severely. Nadir Shah took away its Peacock Throne and robbed it of the more obvious ornaments. In 1764 Suraj Mal and his Jat hordes stripped the *Rang Mahal* of its silver roof and gouged out quantities of precious stones. In 1788 Ghulam Qadir, the Afghan terror, dug up the floors to find any hidden treasures, and despoiled the imperial library of its many riches. However, perhaps, more durable and thus more devastating was the progressive neglect and decay that set in the palace-fortress ensuing upon the growing impotence and depleting resources of the later Mughals who, as seen earlier, had begun to hold court from within. Under the Marathas, who made no attempt at restoration, its condition deteriorated further; the sightless eyes of Shah Alam unable to see the decay around only aiding it. Thus while desperate efforts to maintain an outward show of things had the *Daulat Khanah-i Khas* look somberly splendid, most of the palace-fortress was in a

78. The information on the palace-fortress has been drawn from: Muhammad Salih, *Amal*, 3, pp.24-40; Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat*, 2, pp.41-90; Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar*, 1, pp.272-87; Muhammad Waris, *Padshah-Namah*, f.402(2a)-406(6a), 402a-406a; Maulvi Zafar Hasan, compiled, J.A. Page, et al, edited, R.C. Agrawal, introduction, *Monuments of Delhi: Lasting Splendour of the Great Mughals and Others*, Delhi, 1997, First pub., 1916, 1, pp.1-28; Bernier, *Travels*, pp.242-3, 256-63, 265-8; Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, pp.151-5; M.A. Laird, ed., *Bishop Heber in Northern India*, Cambridge, 1971, pp.230-1, 233-5; Asher, *Architecture*, pp.193-200; Fanshawe, *Shahjahan's Delhi*, pp.20-43.

ruinous state when Bishop Heber visited it in 1824. As he entered the forecourt a swarm of beggars — wives and children of the imperial stable-keepers — beset him. The *Daulat Khanah-i Khas o Am* was 'full of lumber of all descriptions, broken palanqueens and empty boxes, and the throne so covered with pigeon's dung, that its ornaments were hardly discernible'. The gardens were 'dirty, lonely, and wretched: the bath and fountain dry: the inlaid pavement hid with lumber and gardner's sweepings, and the walls stained with the dung of bats and birds.' The *Moti Masjid* was in the 'same state of neglect and dilapidation, with peepuls allowed to spring from its walls, the exterior gilding partially torn from its dome, and some of its doors coarsely blocked up with unplastered brick and mortar.'⁷⁹

The palace-fortress and the two streets radiating out from it formed the principal focal point in the urban plan of Shahjahanabad. The streets were meant to serve as processional avenues on which were represented and legitimized the power, wealth, and significance of the empire. They were its ceremonial space and the bazaars a stage where were ritually enacted the political and social events of the emperor and his household. The religious processions moved on them and regularly displayed the Islamic allegiance of the Mughal state.

The urban plan of Shahjanabad was organized around a secondary focal point which was the Jama'i Masjid. If in the plan the palace-fortress provided a horizontal reference point then the Jama'i Masjid one that was vertical.⁸⁰ On a hillock, 1000 yards south-west of the palace-fortress, its red sandstone-marble structure rested magnificently, with domes rising up, and elegant minarets

79. Laird, ed., *Bishop Heber*, pp. 230, 235, 234.

80. Samuel V. Noe, 'What Happened to Mughal Delhi: A Morphological Survey', in Frykenberg, ed., *Delhi Through the Ages*, p.241.

evenings. Books and armaments were sold side by side; magicians and jugglers entertained; eatables like *kababs*, chicken, and sweet drinks could be bought; a story-teller (*dastan-go*) recited tales from classics like *Dastan-i Amir Hamza*, *Qissa-i Hatim Tai*, *Dastan-i Bostan-i Khayal*; and birds — especially pigeons —, animals, cloth, and other knick-knack were sold.⁸⁶ A Juma Bazaar (Friday Market) was held to coincide with the congregational prayers and books and paintings were put on sale.⁸⁷ The steps had a special character and became intimate to the city's inhabitants. Their individualism is reflected in the growth of a language distinct to them. It was this lingua franca which became the basis of the literary Urdu that evolved in Delhi during the century.⁸⁸

The eastern street of the Jama'i Masjid had a famous *chawk* where was displayed popular cultural to full flourish. This was the Chawk Sadullah Khan, founded by Sadullah Khan, the able *wazir* of Shahjahan. Preachers could be found seated on wooden chairs, talking about the virtues of fasting and pilgrimages, of religious events, and with such intense emotion that the listeners wept copiously; tears were followed by generous donations. In this way the purveyors of religion pocketed much of their money. Loafers collected and heard the sermons until long into the night. Storytellers created a spell; astrologers and geomancers were occupied in foretelling anxious individuals future. *Hakims* cured them of their ailments. Seated on colourful carpets, wearing expensive clothes and conical caps, they peddled cures for everything under the sun, and claimed such magical cures

86. Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, p.161; Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar*, 1, pp.346-8; Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat*, 2, p.103.

87. Anand Ram Mukhlis, *Mirat al-Istelah*, Persian Manuscript Collection, BM, London, Or.1813, f.179, in H.K. Naqvi, 'Shahjahanabad: An Introduction', in Frykenberg, ed., *Delhi Through the Ages*, p.145.

88. Khurshidul Islam and Ralph Russell, *Three Mughal Poets: Mir, Sauda, Mir Hasan*, Delhi, 1991, pp.259, 265.

for sexual dysfunctions that men were only too willing to part with much. There were *naqqals* (mimics) and flatterers busy entertaining. Beautiful lads danced at intervals. The place was full of catamites and beardless lads. Many interesting things were sold: arms and weapons, cloth, birds and animals, beautiful cages, eatables of various kinds, and novelties of all types. Their display, the enticing of customers by the sellers, the cacophony — the *chawk* was a melee of people and its uproar reached the forecourt of the palace-fortress, remarks Dargah Quli Khan, not without a trace of hyperbole.⁸⁹

On the western street of the Jama'i Masjid was a very wide market called the Chawri Bazaar, which according to Mirza Sangin Beg, was a famous market. There were shops selling brass and copper wares, hardwares, paper, draperies, shoes, and other general items. On top of them were abodes of the courtesans or the singing and dancing girls.⁹⁰ Over the years, into the nineteenth century, the bazaar became identified only with them and acquired a legendary reputation. To a poet of the city, Rasikh, it was a paradise teeming with fairies and angelic women:

چاوڑی قاف ہے یا خلد بریں ہے راسخ
 جملے عرووں کے پرلوں کے پرے ملتے ہیں

89. Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa*, pp.125-8; Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat*, 2, p.123; Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, p.155.
90. Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, p.161; Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat*, 2, p.106. At what point the transition occurred is difficult to say from the available information. Sangin Beg does not associate it with prostitution and his account has references of the abodes of singing and dancing girls scattered here and there in the city concentrated, however, around the Jama'i Masjid.
91. The city had more than one poet by the *takhallus* 'Rasikh' whose time span varied from late eighteenth to twentieth centuries. I have not been able to identify the Rasikh of this verse.

In the midst of this pleasure bazaar was a topographical feature which, created by the life of the city's people, is interesting. Movingly called, Badh Shah Bola, it was a huge banyan tree named after no one else but a mystic (*derwish*) whose *mazaar* lay nearby.⁹²

The Jama'i Masjid and its precincts thus throbbed with recreational and leisurely life of the lay-city. The life had become so dear to its inhabitants that it broke the heart of the city's famed poet, Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib (1797-1869), when he saw it systematically destroyed under the British drive to restructure medieval Delhi in the post-1857 period.⁹³

Around the Jama'i Masjid, on its western side, Shahjahan had built two charitable institutions. These were the *Dar al-Baqa*, a home for the poor and orphans, and the *Dar al-Safa*, a hospital for the sick and ailing.⁹⁴ A *Dar al-Ulum* (*madrasa*/Islamic school) stood nearby.⁹⁵ In the area, lying under a *neem* tree, were *mazaars* of two mystics. One, red in colour, belonged to Shaikh Sarmad while the other, green in colour, belonged to Shah Hare Bhare.⁹⁶

The Shahjahanabad of ordinary citizens, like any medieval city, was a maze of numberless streets and lanes, criss-crossing each other, and like a web spread over the entire city. The citizens dwelt amongst them, in mud and thatch huts, built so close to each other that were fire to break out in any it spread from one

92. Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, p.161; Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat*, 2, p.106.

93. Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam, trs. and eds., *Ghalib: Life and Letters*, Delhi, 1994, pp.224, 213, 219, 252.

94. Muhammad Salih, *Amal*, 3, p.43; Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat*, 2, p.113; Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar*, 1, p.348; Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, pp.161-2, 163.

95. Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat*, 2, p.113; Muhammad Salih, *Amal*, 3, p.43.

96. Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, p.156; Bashir al-Din Ahmad, *Waqiat*, 2, pp.114.

tinder roof to the other causing a conflagration in no time.⁹⁷ The formation of streets was a response to the everyday lives of their inhabitants within an overall context of intimate community life. They were defined by a system of *mohallahs* (residential quarters) which, in turn, were organized by the *havelis* of the great lords of the imperial court.⁹⁸

Shahjahan intervened into the lay-city only by distributing plots of land to his courtiers for the construction of their abodes.⁹⁹ Except for the concentration of a few leading ones around the palace-fortress and along the adjoining river bank, these *havelis* were uniformly scattered all over the city, within its tangled lanes and bylanes (*galis* and *koochas*). They were enormous in size. The mansion of the mid-eighteenth century noble Qamar al-Din Khan covered almost an entire block,¹⁰⁰ and that of Safdar Jang is said to have contained space for as many as 5,000 soldiers and 500 horses.¹⁰¹ Visiting Shahjahanabad in the eighteenth century, a Frenchman found that many mansions in the city could compare with small towns in which resided the women, equipment, and bazaars of the nobles.¹⁰² To an onlooker they looked like a fortress¹⁰³, having a lofty gateway in the front. However, within, they were like so many 'fine palaces'¹⁰⁴, built graciously, with

97. Bernier, *Travels*, see p.246.

98. Stephen P. Blake, "Dar al-Khilafat-i Shahjahanabad: The Padshahi Shahar in Mughal India: 1556-1739", doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1974, pp.14-5; Noe, 'What Happened to Mughal Delhi', p.242; Krafft and Ehlers, 'Imperial Design and Military Security', p.126.

99. Noe, 'What Happened to Mughal Delhi', pp.241-2; Krafft and Ehlers, 'Imperial Design and Military Security', p.126.

100.-102. In Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City*, pp.45, 49-50; also James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, 4 vols., London, 1813, 4, pp.63-4.

103. See Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City*, p.49.

104. Manucci, *Storia*, 1, p.178.

apartments exquisitely carved, and embellished with gardens, pavilions, water-courses and fountains; the *havelis* sought to replicate and mimic the palace-fortress.¹⁰⁵

Around the *havelis* grew the innumerable hutments of the vast train of retinues and servants, traders and craftsmen, and other hangers-on dependent upon the patronage of the noble¹⁰⁶ who like a patriarch provided and protected them. The patriarchal relationship between them established the system of *mohallahs*: the key to organizing the residential space, and everyday socio-cultural life of the ordinary citizens of Shahjahanabad.¹⁰⁷ The *mohallahs* were named after the individual noble at the head¹⁰⁸ who at times established them large enough to be called localities (*puras*). Each *mohallah* had shops and stalls for its residents,

-
105. The *havelis* of the great lords, known more formally as the *nashiman* (seat) or *mahal* (palace), are distinguishable from those belonging to the upper classes in general. In the latter was lost much of the formalism, the embellishments, and artistic extravagance of the former.
106. Blake, "Dar al-Khilafat-i Shahjahanabad", pp.14-15; Noe, 'What Happened to Mughal Delhi', p.242; Krafft and Ehlers, 'Imperial Design and Military Security', p.126.
107. Blake considers that the *mohallahs* were governed by a patron-client system of relationship. Blake, "Dar al-Khilafat-i Shahjahanabad", Ch.2.
108. Krafft and Ehlers, 'Imperial Design and Military Security', p.128; Shah Nawaz Khan remarks: '...in the beginning when Shahjahanabad was first constructed there were no mohallahs in which there were not the mansion of an Iranian amir and those mohallahs were known by the names of those amirs'. Nawab Samsam al-Daulah Shah Nawaz Khan and Abdul Hayy, *Ma'asir al-Umara*, tr. H. Beveridge, revised, annotated, and completed by Baini Prasad, 3 vols., Patna, 1979, 2-1, p.177.

mosques, temples, and schools for its children.¹⁰⁹ Shadowless lanes and bylanes wound themselves in and out of their haphazard growth. A cul-de-sac here, or a blind alley there, was only natural. Gates on either ends protected them,¹¹⁰ as much as gave them an identity. Interspersed amongst the *mohallahs* were dwellings of merchants which were commodious in appearance, built of clay, brick, or stone, and had roofs made of straw.¹¹¹

Thus in Shahjahanabad the rich and the poor dwelled side by side.

The courtier and his *mohallah* was, however, the form of the city's residential organisation during its initial phase, or in an idealized sense, when its functions were mostly political. As Shahjahanabad developed commercial functions and acquired a persona other organising principles evolved. Thus there were *mohallahs* based on distinct occupational specialities which, in turn, were segregated by caste, religion, ethnicity, family, or some such characteristic that was meaningful to its inhabitants.¹¹² To cite a few examples, they were *mohallah*

109. The life of the lay-city, here and below, has been constructed from poetry fictional accounts, memoirs, literary and social novels, letters: Mirza Hairat Dehlavi, *Chirag-i Dehli*, Delhi, 1987; Intizar Mirza, ed., *Dilli Ki Tehzeeb*, Delhi, 1991; Ahmad Ali, *Twilight in Delhi*, Bombay, 1966; Maheshwar Dayal, *Shahjahanabad: Alam Mein Intekhab*, Delhi, 1987; *Rediscovering Delhi: The Story of Shahjahanabad*, Delhi, 1982; Russell and Islam, trs. and eds., *Ghalib: Life and Letters*; Muhammad Umar, *Atharvin Sadi Mein Hindustani Mashrat: Mir Ka Ahad*, Delhi, 1973; Pavan K. Varma, *Ghalib: The Man, The Times*, Delhi, 1989.

110. Krafft and Ehlers, 'Imperial Design and Military Security', p.128.

111. Bernier, *Travels*, p.246; Noe, 'What Happened to Mughal Delhi', see p.242.

112. Blake, "Dar al-Khilafat-i Shahjahanabad", pp.6-11, 15-16; Noe, 'What Happened to Mughal Delhi', p.243; S. Nurul Hasan, 'The Morphology of a Medieval Indian City: A Case Study of Shahjahanabad in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', *PIHC*, 1982.

Churigarān (qtrs. of Bangle Makers), *mohallah* Dhobiwada (qtrs. of Washermen), *mohallah* Kashtibānān (qtrs. of Boatmen), *mohallah* Jatwada (qtrs. of Jats), *mohallah* Imli (qtrs. of Tamarind), *mohallah* Chah-i rahat (qtrs. of Persian wheel).

Another development one notices is the growth of sub-*mohallahs* organized around concepts that had absolutely different connotations. These were the *katra* which otherwise meant a warehouse for storing grain, the *chatta* which was a covered lane or bazaar, the *gali* and *koocha* which, of course, was the street and bylane. As of *mohallahs*, they were defined by an individual, obviously of importance, caste/craft specialization, ethnicity, or any specific characteristic. Thus the city had *katra* Bazāzan (Cloth Merchants), *katra* Hijra (qtrs. of eunuchs), *katra* Kashmiriyan (qtrs. of Kashmiris), Panjabi *gadi bano ka katra* (qtrs. of Panjabi Cart-drivers), *katra* Shaikh Chand (qtrs. of Shaikh Chand), Adina Begam *ka katra* (qtrs. of Adina Begam), *katra* Murgian (qtrs. of Birds and Fowls), Ghi *ka katra* (qtrs. of Clarified Butter), *katra* Nil (qtrs. of Indigo). Similarly there were *chatta* Mimaran (qtrs. of Masons), *chatta* Momgaran (qtrs. of Wax Workers), *chatta* Shah Nizam al-Din (qtrs. of Nizam al-Din), *chatta* Shah Haji (qtrs. of Shah Haji), *chatta* Nigambodh Ghat (qtrs. of Nigambodh Ghat), *chatta* Lahori Darwaza (qtrs. of Lahori Gate). There were too *gali* Sita Ram (street of Sita Ram), *koocha* Pati Ram (rue of Pati Ram), *koocha* Batashewalan (rue of Batashes), *koocha* Pandit (rue of Brahmins), *koocha* Naiwada (rue of Barbers), *koocha* Balimaran (rue of Oarsmen), *koocha* Jogiwada (rue of Jogis), and so forth.

It is instructive that Sangin Beg, from whose exhaustive account the quarters' name have been picked, nowhere refers to the quarters through their religious denomination, a mode of definition that has become predominant in the

city's form today.¹¹³ Clearly the citizens were viewed as part of collectivity first and then in any other category. Defining them primarily through denominational oppositions seems to be a post-eighteenth century development. Yet it is also true that Sangin Beg virtually omits the mention of temples (as many as 147 in early nineteenth century) in the city's topography whilst detailing the location of even the smallest mosque within it. Clearly the presence of Islam in his consciousness had implication of marginalising the Hindus at the religious — if not the social — level.

The commercial developments which Delhi witnessed provided the city with a strength and resilience which was greatly responsible for its survival even after its political functions were on the decline. It is interesting that the changes occurred in context of a gradual appropriation of the *haveli* by the newly prosperous social groups and its depreciation from the gracious mansion of the courtier to a modest upper — even middle — class abode. In his account Sangin Beg refers to *havelis* of *mahajans*, *bantias*, even a tailor and *tawaif* (dancer), and of the ordinary people or the *raiyyat* (people) generally. Ghalib, perpetually in debt, could yet rent a *haveli*.¹¹⁴ Clearly the city was losing its political functions to give way to commercial ones. Thus while the *Seir al-Manazil* shows elite and occupational *mohallahs* existing in equal measure in the early eighteenth century, Blake's clear analysis reveals that by its later years the caste/craft *mohallahs*, displacing the elite, had become the fundamental principle of residential organization within the city.¹¹⁵

113. I gathered this from my personal stay in Old Delhi (Shahjahanabad's present nomenclature) where *mohallahs* were identified by falling in the Hindu area or the Muslim area.

114. Varma, *Ghalib*, p.89.

115. Blake, "Dar al-Khilafat-i Shahjahanabad", see pp.6-11.

The *mohallahs* bred a life that was marked by all the orderliness and complexities, concerns and abrasions, colour and vibrancy implicit in a collective existence. A lack of privacy and of self-restraint infused social relationships with the warmth of a personal culture. So much happened in the *galis* and *koochas*. To go out on them meant to see and be seen. Happenings in the households, even its brawls, could spill onto them. Its celebrations — as marriages — and tragedies — as deaths — were staged on them, for the neighbourhood, for the public, to see. Extensions of the private space domestic chores could go on to engulf them. Hawkers peddled along them announcing wares in flowery verses and melodious voices, while mendicants sought alms in soulful poetry. A cock-fighter and his audience may be seen engaged in a combat by some, a monkey's dance could be regaled in by others. A love smitten youth could pass by the walls of his sweetheart's house with a lingering backward look. The resonant voice of a *muezzin's azaan* could fill them and the clang of a temple's bell strike them. And in the mornings and evenings, pigeons and colourful kites swished the sky above in happy sport. Thus one of the city's best known poets, Mir Taqi Mir, could say hauntingly:

دلی کے نہ تھے کوچے اور اقی مصور تھے

جو شکل نظر آئی تصویر نظر آئی

The streets of Delhi were like painted pages
Whichever way one passed appeared like a painting.

To go to the bazaar of the *mohallah* meant dressing up, exchanging news, and gossiping. Similarly to go to its mosque or temple was an occasion to be with the collectivity and socialize. The intimacy of this life is movingly expressed in a verse of Mir:

جو اس شور سے میر روتا رہے گا

تو ہمسایہ کا ہے کو سوتا رہے گا

If Mir's cries rend the heart
Can the neighbour remain indifferent.

The life became dear to its inhabitants and Zauq, the nineteenth century poet, could say lovingly of its streets and lanes:-

کون جائے ذوق پر دلی کی گلیاں چھوڑ کے

Ask me not O Zauq! to renounce the beloved streets of Delhi

An erstwhile twentieth century dweller of the city, Ahmad Ali, recreated the life with a heavy heart in a novel he wrote, *Twilight in Delhi*, and Maheshwar Dayal, another lover, tried to nostalgically recall it in his *Shahjahanabad: Alam Mein Intekhab*.¹¹⁶

Scattered amongst the *mohallahs* were markets galore. They were general markets, specialized ones, and those which carried wholesale or retail trade. *Serais* were built in plenty and wells were all over. The streets were filled with mosques and temples. Gardens studded them here and there. The river bank was evocative with *havelis* and retreats of nobles. As the city's population increased, the hutments multiplied and encroached upon its open spaces, streets, and lanes. Hakim Maharat Khan Isfahani, its early eighteenth century dweller, reported

116. The publication details of the books have been given in n. 109.

great difficulty negotiating the clogged pathways near his home.¹¹⁷ Its southern segment was densely built and crowded as opposed to the northern which was conspicuous with *serais* and *hammams*, gardens and *ghats* (river-banks). An amorphous wall 9 yards (27') high, 4 yards (12') thick, and 6,664 yards (3.8 miles) long encircled the city¹¹⁸ underscoring, a lack of interest in planning beyond the imperial level, and the irrelevance of defence to an empire confident of itself.

However to perceive the topography of Shahjahanabad in the neat categories of planned and unplanned city is rather schematic and blurs the organic unity the city otherwise possessed. The very structure of its urban design, according to Samuel V. Noe, provided the 'setting for a rich and gracious public life, as well as a comprehensively ordered network of communities'.¹¹⁹ Though the planned city served as an imperial ceremonial space and was meant to represent the Mughal state, its architectural edifices had power in relation to the citizens of the city. This is exhibited in that they became icons of their cultural life. It is reflected in the extent to which they were integrated in their emotional life. Underlining it, and therefore the organic unity of Shahjahanabad, is a moving letter of Ghalib written to a friend expressing the destruction of the city caused in the post-1857 period:

'My friend, what a question to ask! Five things kept Delhi alive — the Fort, the daily crowds at the Jama'i Masjid, the weekly walk to the Jamuna bridge, and the yearly fair of the *Phool Walon Ki Seir* (a fair which had imperial origins but came to be celebrated by the entire city). None of these survives, so how could Delhi survive? Yes, there was once a city of that name in the realm of India.'¹²⁰

117. Hakim Maharat Khan Isfahani, *Bahjat al-Alam*, f.35b.

118. *Monuments of Delhi*, 1, p.187.

119. Noe, 'What Happened to Mughal Delhi', p.237.

120. Russell and Islam, trs. and eds., *Ghalib: Life and Letters*, p.224.

The affection the poets lavished was always upon the city as a whole. Mir's shattered voice over its destruction was a tear shed at everything that was Delhi:

کیا بود و باش پوچھو ہو پورب کے ساکتوا ہم کو غریب جان کے ہنس ہنس پکار کے
 دلی جو ایک شہر تھا عالم میں انتخاب رہتے تھے منتخب ہی جہاں روزگار کے
 اس کو فلک نے لوٹ کے ویران کر دیا ہم رہنے والے ہیں اسی اُجڑے دیار کے

You Easterners, why do you mock at me
 And ask about my homeland
 Delhi was once a city fairest of all
 Where dwelt the select and elect of the age
 Fate has looted and ravaged it
 To that desolate wilderness I belong.

Suburbs

Beyond the walls of the city stretched the suburbs of Shahjahanabad which were a mix of the picturesque and the desolate. It is important to dwell upon them because the everyday life of the citizens of the city was closely tied with them.

Containing as many as fifty-two bazaars and thirty-six *mandis*, the suburbs were a source of economic sustenance for the city. The most important of them was the Paharganj [Refer Map IV], a wholesale grain market, located just outside the Ajmeri Gate of the city. Connecting the Paharganj and the Akbarabadi Gate was another such market called the Shahganj. Towards the far south-east of the city, on the opposite bank of the Jamuna, were the *mohallahs* of Patparganj and Shadhara where wholesale grain merchants resided. Both the *mohallahas* were destroyed in the disorders of the mid-eighteenth century and rebuilt in the twentieth century. On the far south-west was Rakabganj, a *mohallah* whose principal inhabitants were

the *banjaras* (grain dealers) in the household or stirrup (*rikab*) of the emperor. In the far north-west was a populous residential-cum-commercial quarter called the *Sabzi Mandi* (Vegetable Market) which, as the name suggests, may have once been a specialized market selling vegetables. Near the *Sabzi Mandi*, on the highway to Lahore, was an extensive bazaar called Tripolia after its massive triple-arched gateways on either ends. It was built in 1728-29 by a noble, Mahaldar Khan, superintendent of the women's apartments in Muhammad Shah's reign. A row of bazaars and *mohallahs* connected the Mori Gate and Kashmiri Gate of the city. These were also destroyed in the disorders of the eighteenth century.

Into the suburbs spilled the religious and socio-cultural life of the inhabitants of Shahjahanabad. The *dargahs* that lay here were centres of it. Of the many some were notable. There was the *dargah* of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya which was situated towards the south of the city's Akbarabadi Gate. In the *dargah* rested the tombs of the poet Amir Khusrau, Jahan-Ara Begam, and emperor Muhammad Shah. To its west, and south of the Lahori Gate, were the *dargahs* of Shaikh Baqi Billah and Shaikh Hasan Rasul-Numa. Around this area lay the *dargah* of Shaikh Nasir al-Din *Chirag-i Delhi*. In the far south-west of the suburbs, some twelve miles from the city, was the *dargah* of Shaikh Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki popularly known as 'Qutb Sahib'. The route to it from the city was a 'striking scene' of barren and rocky terrain scattered with tombs and ruins. The *dargah* of the mystic was part of a complex of structures which was a favourite spot of leisure and recreation with the *Dilliwalahs*. Mehrauli, as it was called, was a place for them to enjoy in gardens, springs, and fountains. An object of major attraction in this complex was the famous Qutb Minar, a wondrously tall tower, all so finely carved. Climbing it to the top, and spreading her eyes on the environs around, Emily Roberts found the scene 'sublime' and of 'dreary grandeur': a 'sea of ruins',

the Jamuna gliding 'snake-like' and rolling its 'silver currents', the citadel of Salimgarh, in the background, rearing its 'dark turreted heights', and still further in the distance, the 'white and glittering mosques' of the city, appearing amidst the 'dark-green foliage of the surrounding trees'. Hard by the *minar* (tower) was the curious iron pillar weathering everything from ancient times and standing intact. Surrounding were great many ruins of mosques, temples, tombs, and *serais* exciting historical interest. A famed centre was the 'Qadam Sharif' — a relic housing the footprint of Prophet Muhammad — which was located south of the Lahori Gate. Many notables had bought land for their graves around it. West of it was the Idgah which was said to be a fine enclosure and from it a 'very pleasing' view of the city could be had. About nine kms south of the city was another 'Qadam Sharif' which, housing the footprint of Ali, was significant to the lives of the Shia inhabitants of the city.

The tombs of rulers and nobles scattered in the suburbs also had a place in the socio-cultural and religious life of the citizens of Shahjahanabad. Of the many mausoleums the one belonging to emperor Humayun was the most important. Located south of the Akbarabadi Gate, near the *dargah* of Shaikh Nizam ad-Din Auliya, it was a chaste and noble structure of red sandstone upon which rested a great dome of white marble. Set on a high platform and surrounded by an embattled wall, it had four gateways and arcaded rooms all around. The tomb lay in a large garden of terraces and fountains. Several members of the imperial family were interred within it. The entire route from the city to it was, as Bishop Heber felt, a 'very awful scene of desolation, ruins after ruins, tombs after tombs, fragments of brick-work, freestone, granite and marble, scattered everywhere over a soil naturally rocky and barren, without cultivation,... without a single tree.'

The Mughals had laid many gardens in the suburbs, particularly along the banks of the Jamuna and in the tree-shaded groves outside the city's gates. About five miles south of the Akbarabadi Gate, on the bank of Jamuna, was Khizrabad, a garden laid by Shahjahan. It was here that Aurangzeb imprisoned Dara Shukoh after vanquishing him in the struggle over succession to the imperial throne. Outside the Lahori Gate was a group of gardens. Near the *Sabzi Mandi* was one built by the emperor's daughter, Raushan-Ara Begam, in 1650. Here in an enclosure, open to the sky, she was laid to rest upon death in 1671. In the same area was the garden-tomb of Nawab Sirhindi Begam, a wife of Shahjahan. Six miles west of the Lahori Gate was the Shalimar (Abode of Joy) built by Nawab Akbarabadi Begam in 1653-54. Bernier spoke of it as being fine, with handsome and noble buildings. However it was ruined in the disorders of the eighteenth century. It was here that Aurangzeb hastily, and informally, crowned himself as emperor after defeating Dara Shukoh at Samurgarh, and Nadir Shah encamped on quitting Delhi. At Rikabganj was built Talkatora which is thought to have been a hunting lodge (*shikargah*) of Muhammad Shah. Outside the Kabuli Gate of the city Shahjahan laid a garden full of neem trees called Tees Hazari *Bagh* (Garden of Three Thousand). Here were interred Zinat un-Nissa Begam, daughter of Aurangzeb, and Malka Zamani Begam, mother of Muhammad Shah. In 1748, north of Kashmiri Gate, on the banks of Jamuna, spread a huge and splendrous garden-complex named after herself. Qudsiya *Bagh*, as it was, contained a large two-storied palace, a mosque, and was fronted by a massive gate. Near the Kashmiri Gate were two more gardens built by important Mughal nobles — Ali Mardan Khan and Jaffar Khan. At Tripolia Mahaldar Khan had made a garden which had a handsome gate.

In the suburbs lay many *serais* for travellers and traders moving into and out of the city; the best known being, *Arab ki Serai*, located adjacent to Humayun's tomb. *Havelis* and *mohallas* of some of the city's nobles were also there. The *Nahr-i Bihisht* flowed through them and watering its gardens and groves, springs and fountains, *havelis* and *mohallahas* entered Shahjahanabad by its Kabuli Gate emphasizing that the suburbs were, in a way, a life-line of its inhabitants.¹²¹

III

Shahjahanabad : An Expression of the Mughal State's Legitimacy

Like any city of the medieval world Shahjahanabad was organized on certain principles distinguishing it from a modern city. Its layout followed an outline which made it in some ways akin to what G. von. Grunebaum and Fernand Braudel have characterized as an Islamic city and, yet, it had a strong individuality that brought it nearer being a Mughal than an Islamic city, even if one were to accept this term. To us, the city seems to be an expression of the principles from which the Mughal state drew its legitimacy, two basic elements of which were: Islam and paternalism.

The state in medieval India, all through its functioning, frequently invoked symbols derived from Islam. Islam was an important presence in the consciousness

121. For suburbs the following sources have been used: Fanshawe, *Shahjahan's Delhi*, pp.54-64, 222-92; Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa*, pp.115, 116, 117, 118-9, 120, 121, 122; Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, pp.191-283; Bernier, *Travels*, pp.242, 283; Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City*, pp.57-63; Laird, ed., *Bishop Herber*, pp.227-8, 236; Emily Roberts, *Hindustan: Its Landscapes, Palaces, Temples, Tombs*, 2 vols., London, 1845, 2, p.69; Asher, *Architecture*, pp.202-4, 300, 302-5; Thomas Twining, *Travels in India a Hundred Years Ago*, edited by William H.G. Twining, London, 1893, pp.219-20, 242-9, 253.

of its ruling class¹²² and this consciousness can be seen expressed in a variety of ways. When the early sultans of Delhi sought to designate themselves as *Nasir-i Amir-al Muminin* (Assistant to the Chief of the Muslims), and the imperial forces were termed 'armies of Islam' by court chroniclers of the Delhi sultanate and the Mughal empire, and those of their non-Muslim opponents 'the infidels', and wars became *jihad* (holy wars), and the *Khutba* was read by the Imam every Friday at the Congregational Mosque — the meanings embedded in these acts and images could only underline the Islamic identity of the state.

Pampering of the Muslim theologians was a fairly frequent feature of state policy. They were often consulted in matters of state and a substantial part of its revenue, amounting between 5 and 6 per cent, was alienated as *madad-i maash* mostly, though not entirely, to them.¹²³ Even in Akbar's reign, though only in its early years, state sanction for clear acts of Islamic bigotry have been recorded. Bayazid Biyat, proudly, proclaims the assignment of two villages to him by the Emperor for having demolished an old temple and converting it into a mosque and a *madrasa*.¹²⁴ From Abul Fazl we learn that Akbar's prominent noble, Pir Muhammad Khan, earned no censure when he put to death the eighty year old father of the slain adversary, Hemu, for refusing to convert to Islam.¹²⁵ Jahangir, otherwise not known for acts of bigotry, sacrificed a bullock at the fort of Kangra

122. Harbans Mukhia suggests that Islamic consciousness existed at the political, intellectual, and popular levels in medieval India. Mukhia 'Communalism and Indian Polity,' *South Asia Bulletin*, 11, 1 & 2, 1991, pp.62-9.

123. Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, pp.313-6.

124. Bayazid Biyat, *Tazkira-i Humayun wa-Akbar*, ed. M. Hidayat Husain, Calcutta, 1941, pp. 310-3.

125. Abul Fazl, *Akbar-Namah*, 2, pp.71-2.

after vanquishing it — a fact he records with some pride for, he states, that such a thing had never happened there earlier. He also ordered the construction of a lofty mosque inside the fort.¹²⁶

The sentiment of identification with Islam became particularly high-pitched during times of crisis. Firuz Shah Tuglaq, faced with imminent break-up of the Delhi sultanate, granted many concessions to the *ulema*, consulted them on the taxes to be imposed, demolished temples, and was the first sultan to impose *jazyah* on the Brahmins.¹²⁷ And Babur, a happy-go-lucky person otherwise, fond of his cup of wine and other intoxicants, great and sensual poet, lover of flowers and women, having little trace of fanaticism, nevertheless resorted to Islamic puritanism to rally his nervous soldiers on the eve of the battle of Kanwaha (1527) fought with the great warrior, Rana Sanga.¹²⁸ Aurangzeb's various acts of religious bigotry — the reimposition of *jazyah* and extensive demolition of temples — have been ably linked by Athar Ali to a growing crisis of the empire.¹²⁹ It would appear, that overly asserting the Islamic identity of the state, and seeking to rally the orthodox Muslim groups in the court, suggested itself as the most obvious solution to the problems confronted by it. Identification with Islam, in varying measures, thus constituted a resource from which the medieval Indian state drew some of its legitimacy.

The layout of Shahjahanabad articulated the metaphorical sublimation of this concept by placing the Jama'i Masjid at the highest point in the whole scheme — both physically and symbolically. A hillock (Bhojla Pahari), in the centre of the

126. Jahangir, *Tuzuk*, 2, p.223.

127. Shams Siraj Afif, *Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi*, ed. M. Wilayat Husain, Calcutta, 1888-91, pp.17, 23, 374-9, 382-4, 579-81.

128. Babur, *Babur-Namah*, see pp.547-73.

129. M. Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, Bombay, 1966.

city, had been selected as the site for it. From its rocky eminence the Jama'i Masjid overwhelmed all other structures of the city — not only of the lay population but even the palace-fortress. Its specific location made a political statement: That the medieval Indian state accepted the metaphorical supremacy of God's over the emperor's presence. The courtly etiquette of paying obeisance to one's superior by seating him above oneself and everyone else was being extended to the house of Allah.

However Islam was not the exclusive, nor perhaps, even the major, source of the State's legitimacy. Only a theocratic Muslim state could have sourced it exclusively to Islam. That would oblige it to (a) use state power to propagate Islam and eliminate 'infidelity' from the land, and (b) to establish the supremacy of the *shariat* as the exclusive system of jurisprudence.¹³⁰ While this is what Islamic state power was able to achieve in the Middle-East, the medieval Indian state does not pass scrutiny on either of the two counts. For after five and a half centuries of highly centralized rule, and another two centuries of British rule, the Muslim population in India was less than a quarter of the total on the eve of independence. This contrasts remarkably with the Middle-East where virtually entire populations were converted to Islam. Nor could this small proportion of Muslims be attributed to the fierce resistance of Hindus to active intervention of state in the process of conversion, for, the evidence of conversions in the court chronicles, or for that matter in literary works whether composed by Muslims or Hindus, is so scarce that to date no historian has attempted a monograph-length study of this phenomenon.¹³¹

130. This test has been established by Mukhia in 'Communalism'.

131. See Ibid.

How far did the medieval Indian state implement Islamic jurisprudence within the empire to the exclusion of others? Unlike the Arab nations of the Middle-East, Islamic jurisprudence had an applicability limited only to some criminal offences in medieval India. In civic life each religious group was free to follow its own legal codes. Even in criminal offences the state rarely took resort to extreme Islamic punishments like hacking off the offenders' limbs for theft, or stoning them for adultery. The state could yet claim a theocratic status by treating its non-Muslim subjects as *zimmis*, their lives and property secure, but subject to the loss of aspiration for equality with the Muslim citizenry. The imposition of *jazyah* was its most overt signifier. But such a state was conceived as merely transitional, its territory transiting from *dar al-harb* to *dar al-Islam* (from contested territory to one under Islam's dominance), rather than permanent; at any rate even *jazyah* and other marks of discrimination were practised so fitfully in medieval India that it would be hard to establish them as distinctive features of the state.

Clearly, then, an ambiguity inhered in medieval Indian state: While frequently sourcing its legitimacy to Islamic symbols, the state did not allow Islamic theocracy to govern its functioning. A more important *raison d'être* of the state appears to be paternalism, by no means incompatible with Islam. This, in turn, devolved in various concerns: maintenance of social order, grandeur, generosity, and aloofness, each reinforcing the others.

The notion of the state as *paterfamilias* itself has a history in medieval India. Under the Delhi sultanate Zia al-Din Barani, state's chief theoretician, in *Fatawa-i Jahandari* envisioned the *raison d'être* of the state as no more than an exercise of power — in the form of terror — by the ruling class on the subjects, much in the *Arthasastra* tradition. 'The governance of men is not possible without

the dominance and prestige of royalty'¹³², observes Barani. Subjects are to be instilled with fear: '... the mass of the people tremble only from the fear of sultan, his terror and his power, and his blood-shedding sword.'¹³³ To Barani: '... the world is full of demonic men, who have the characteristics of lions, carnivorous animals, and beasts of prey. Command and control over them cannot be established without the terror and power of dominating kings'.¹³⁴ Evidently, the subjects are viewed as potential enemies to be kept on the tight leash of domination through terror.

By the Mughal era, exercise of power had become moderated with a concern for the welfare of the subjects. Abul Fazl, the classic exponent and rationalizer of the Mughal state, expounding on the attributes of kingship considers, a paternal love for the subjects, its prime attribute.¹³⁵ He patterns the relationship of the emperor and his subjects on the relationship of a father with his family: provider, concerned with its welfare, protector, preserver of order within it. The subjects, like children, respond to paternalistic care with complete obedience. Abul Fazl dwells:

'... let him, if a ruler, prefer the betterment of others to his own; for the duty of the shepherd is watching the flock, and the design of sovereignty is universal guardianship. If he be a subject, let him, first of all, show alacrity in obeying the orders of his legitimate ruler, and then let him cleanse the secret chambers of his heart from the dust of heavy-pacing sensuality and nimble footed wrath, so that, by his life and conversation, he be a teacher and a testimony of the incomparable giver and cherisher of his outer and inner man.'¹³⁶

132. Muhammad Habib and Afsar Umar Salim Khan, *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate* (including a tr. of Zia al-Din Barani's *Fatawa-i Jahandari*), Delhi, n.d., p.33.

133. *Ibid.*, p.40.

134. *Ibid.*, p.34.

135. Abul Fazl, *Ain*, tr. H.S. Jarrett, 3 vols., reprint, Delhi, 1989, 1, p.3.

136. Abul Fazl, *Akbar-Namah*, 1, p. 10.

Elsewhere, Adul Fazl observes: ‘... subjects... are a trust from the Creator, and... should be tended not less carefully than the children...’¹³⁷ This paternalistic relationship was best symbolized in the practice of the *Jharokha-i Darshan* which had the emperor appear on the balcony of his palace, each morning, and give *darshan* to his subjects assembled below. Like a guardian, grand, and distant he showed himself only to make them feel secure and protected. It reinforced his authority amongst them, and control over the empire.

It is this philosophy of paternalism that seems to underlie the placing of the palace-fortress at the edge of Shajahanabad’s layout: grand, distant, at the head, but overseeing the subjects in the streets and markets — suggestive of paternal presence.

The Mughal state established a remarkable strength of social order in its vast domain. This was achieved through various agencies. To begin with, a very sophisticated administrative apparatus was established. It was based on a high degree of centralized control, overlapping jurisdiction, and the incorporation and absorption of indigenous elites right down to the village level. This tightly knit system of checks and balances, and co-operation from the local groups, assured the Mughal state administrative control for more than a century and a half, making it the longest lasting empire in Indian history. A level of law and order was established which protected the populace of the empire and the safety of its routes. An efficient and large military apparatus kept the empire secure from external invasions and internal threats from possible foes, though the security was occasionally punctured by uprisings of nobles and princes. Matrimonial alliances with native chieftains transmuted the self-assertive ambitions of the erstwhile ruling class into compliance. An ever expansive nobility prevented potential rivals

137. Ibid., p.499.

of the dynasty from gaining ground, though emperors did face challenges. A heavily hierarchized court not only reflected the various stations of society but reinforced, validated, and socialized its members into them. These measures enforced order, absorbed conflict, and diluted tension in a large measure. Abul Fazl's statement: 'if royalty did not exist, the storm of strife would never subside'¹³⁸, indeed, suggests that maintenance of the social order was the very *raison d'être* of the ruler. His constantly repeated emphasis on the need for harmony rather than conflict in society¹³⁹ provided the theoretical underpinning of the Mughal state.

This extreme concern for order was reflected in the orderliness of Shahjahanabad, especially the part where imperial processions traversed. Here everything followed decided notions of what should be included and what excluded, of specific location, and detailed dimensions. The city was a planned one, a response to Agra which had become disorderly and congested.¹⁴⁰ Order to it was also provided by a city-wall which had an administrative-judicial value, for, it delimited the territorial extent of the city, rather than provided it with security, something implied in Bernier's observation on the wall's inability to defend the city.¹⁴¹ The City Magistrate's Platform (*Kotwali Chabutra*) located at the heart of the city, reflected, the seriousness with which the state viewed disturbance of law and order.

The empire seems to have attached a very high value to grandeur, and history has come to treat it as a major attribute of the Mughals, almost a synonym. Grand was the apparel worn by the emperor. It was awesome in its luxuriance

138. Abul Fazl, *Ain*, 1, p.2.

139. *Ibid.*

140. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City*, p.27.

141. Bernier, *Travels*, pp.241-2.

what with silks, brocades, and precious jewels.¹⁴² The throne on which he sat was even grander — the Peacock Throne of Shahjahan being the envy of neighbouring empires and European travellers' cynosure. This piece of sumptuary art caught the jeweller-merchant Tavernier's eye, and he dwelled at length upon it.¹⁴³ This was one of the two most precious trophies of plunder Nadir Shah carried home to Iran in 1739, the other being the Koh-i Noor diamond. Similarly resplendent were the imperial processions what with bejewelled royalty and courtiers, richly caprisoned horses and elephants, glittering royal ensignias, and a long train of followers.¹⁴⁴ Even a routine royal procession was impressive. Bernier has described one when the emperor went to the Jama'i Masjid for the weekly Friday prayer:

'... his Majesty leaves the fortress, sometimes on an elephant, decorated with rich trappings, and a canopy supported by painted and gilt pillars; and sometimes in a throne gleaming with azure and gold, placed on a litter with scarlet and brocade, which eight chosen men, in handsome attire, carry on their shoulders. A body of *Omrachs* follow the King, some on horseback, and others in Palkeys, and amongst the *Omrachs* are seen a great number of mansebdars, and the bearers of silver maces....'¹⁴⁵

The grandeur which Bernier seeks to convey in words has been even more effectively captured by an early eighteenth century Delhi artist who has depicted a procession of the contemporary emperor proceeding to Idgah for celebrating the festival of *Id*.¹⁴⁶ The procession is incredible considering that the imperial resources, by then, were a pale shadow of their former dimensions. The notion of

142. *Ibid.*, p.268.

143. J.B. Tavernier, *Travels in India*, tr. V. Ball, ed. William Crooke, 2 vols., reprint, Delhi, 1989, pp.303-5.

144. Bernier gives a superb description of one such procession carrying princess Raushan-Ara, daughter of Shahjahan. Bernier, *Travels*, pp.372-3.

145. *Ibid.*, p.280.

146. Reproduced in M.M. Kaye, ed., *The Golden Calm*, pp.150-9.

grandeur had survived the depletion of the means of maintaining it! Supreme efflorescence of Mughal grandeur is seen in their famed architectural monuments. Their scale, symmetry, decoration, and sumptuousness, combining with an exuberance characteristically indigenous, gave them a distinctive majesty. The famed examples are Humayun's tomb, Akbar's tomb at Sikandra, Taj Mahal, the palace-fortresses at Fatehpur Sikri, Agra and Delhi. They contrasted sharply with the monuments of the sultanate which, except the Alai Darwaza, are marked by a sternness and austerity, besides a diminutive scale.

Grandeur of imperial processions and monuments permeated the planning of Shahjahanabad. The city itself was founded to provide the empire with a grand ceremonial headquarter. Its principle streets, designed with great care and imagination, served the empire processional ways. The city had a palace-fortress which, in Fergusson's words, was '... the most magnificent in the East'.¹⁴⁷ Six million rupees were spent on its construction.¹⁴⁸ The Jama'i Masjid equaled it in magnificence and cost a million rupees.¹⁴⁹ Clearly expense was of little importance for the Mughal emperor if the buildings could be made to conform his fantasies and aesthetic imperatives. The *Begam ki Serai* was another magnificent structure of the city. Besides there were other edifices which, though on smaller scale, were grand and expensive.

Did such grandeur of monumental dimensions have any social or political significance, besides its aesthetic appeal? It would appear, that the sense of awe this spectacular achievement inspired then, as it does today, would have won approval or tolerance for the Mughal state much as the awe inspired by the father's

147. James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, 2 vols., Delhi, 1967, 2, p.309.

148. Muhammad Salih, *Amal-i Salih*, 3, p.24.

149. *Ibid.*, p.42.

assumed or imputed grandeur wins children's compliance. It would have incited envy and a model for emulation or aspiration. Grandeur would have translated itself into honour, some of it rubbing off on the viewer, especially the inhabitant of a city of such spectacular sites.

Abul Fazl considers, a large heart, one of the dominant attributes of kingship.¹⁵⁰ In *Akbar-Namah*, Akbar is quoted as having observed: 'We, by virtue of our being the shadow of God, receive little and give much. Our forgiveness has no relish for vengeance...'¹⁵¹ The Emperor, obliquely, reiterates the same sentiment: 'Tyranny is unlawful in everyone, especially in a sovereign who is the guardian of the people.'¹⁵² Mughal generosity was demonstrated in various ways: gifts of jewels, valuable robes of honour, gratuities, elephants, horses, mansabs, promotions and privileges given with a liberal hand. Celebrations such as coronation, birthday of the emperor, *Nauroz*, etc. were occasions when the generosity of the Mughal emperor was even more pronounced. Inayat Khan writes of the bequests made on Shahjahan's accession to the throne:

'... on the auspicious day, a total of 72 lakhs of rupees were bestowed, out of which, ... 60 lakhs of rupees were distributed to the high-ranked ladies in the *seraglio* of fortune and to the Princes of exalted origin; while 12 lakhs of rupees were given away to the nobles, state officers, Sayyids, saints, scholars, pious persons, and poets and others.'¹⁵³

150. Abul Fazl, *Ain*, 1, p.3.

151. Abul Fazl, *Akbar-Namah*, 3, p.136.

152. Abul Fazl, *Ain*, 3, p.451.

153. Inayat Khan, *Shahjahan-Namah*, tr. A.R. Fuller, ed. W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai, Delhi, 1990, p.19.

Further:

'All of the nobles and mansabdars who were present in the court were reconfirmed in their various ranks and were also honoured with increments. According to their status, each of the nobles received favours in the form of robes of honour; jeweled blades, daggers and swords; flags, drums and standards of high military rank; and horses, elephants and cash.'¹⁵⁴

On the weighing ceremony of the Emperor's birthday, Inayat Khan writes:

'Everyone of the nobles and mansabdars... was treated with suitable liberality... a number of... Deccanis, turned the countenance of hope towards this prosperous threshold and were munificently recompensed with sumptuous gifts and appropriate mansabs.'¹⁵⁵

Largesse was distributed amongst the poor on such occasions. Thus:

'His exalted person was weighed once against gold, once against silver, and six times against other articles; which funds were then distributed amongst the needy.'¹⁵⁶

Nisar was showered on them. Alms were distributed to the poor and destitute. Free meals were provided to them. Hospitals carrying out free treatment were opened. *Serais* were built for tired travelers. Inayat Khan constantly refers to the 'generosity' and 'munificence' of the Emperor.

Shahjahanabad expressed the generosity and kindness of the Mughal State in an important way. The *Begam ki Serai* of Jahan-Ara, to reiterate, was the third monumental structure in the city after the palace-fortress and the Jama'i Masjid. Fatehpuri Begam and Akbarabadi Begam had attached *serais* to their mosques. All of the above were located on the city's main streets. Apart from these prominent

154. Ibid.

155. Ibid., pp.72-3.

156. Ibid., p.28.

ones, Shahjahanabad had number of *serais* scattered all over. In a focal zone of the city — around the Jama'i Masjid — were built the charitable institutions of *Dar al-Shafa* and *Dar al-Baqa*.

Like a father, who with all care for his family is yet aloof, the Mughal emperor carried out his paternalistic concerns from afar. He set himself apart, and created an unbridgeable distance between himself and others, surrounding himself with the grandeur he is identified with, a heavily hierarchized court, and the paraphernalia of courtly rituals and etiquettes:

'... the sages of ancient times have said that princes who wear the jewel of wisdom do not appoint every low man to their service; that they do not consider everyone who has been appointed, to be deserving of daily admittance; that those who are thus favoured, are not therefore deemed worthy to sit on the carpet of intercourse; that those who are worthy of this station, are not necessarily admitted to the pavilion of familiar address; that those who have this privilege, are not therefore allowed to sit in the august assembly; that those upon whom this ray of good fortune falls, are not therefore let into their secrets; and that those who enjoy the happiness of this station, are not therefore fit for admission into the Cabinet Council.'¹⁵⁷

An almost inflexible protocol followed by the emperors reinforced the impression of their distinctive presence.

The presence of the emperor was manifested in Shahjahanabad in the palace-fortress: aloof, at a distance, located in a corner. Its internal layout too followed this principle. The various structures were spread on the basis of court hierarchy that separated the emperor from everyone else. As one entered the Fort

157. Abul Fazl, *Ain*, 1, pp.8-9.

there were the dwellings of the merchants, artisans, clerks, soldiers, and servants. Beyond them were the Halls of Public and Private Audience. At the edge of the palace-fortress rested the apartments of the emperor.

The dual sources from which the Mughal state derived its legitimacy determined the extent to which Shahjahanabad conformed to a traditional Islamic city of the Middle-East and its emergence as a city with an individual identity. A typical Islamic city of the Middle-East has been described as one in which the Great Congregational Mosque was at the centre and adjacent to it was the main bazaars and the public baths. This formed the core of the city, from which evolved its crafts in concentric circles, based on traditional Islamic notions of pure and impure.¹⁵⁸ The Mosque was the centre of its commercial, intellectual, and political life. In other words, the Mosque created the city. To such a city Shahjahanabad was similar only in part. Here, too, the Great Congregational Mosque was located in the centre, but its role in the city's life was ambivalent. While participating in its political and intellectual life and having bazaars around, the Great Mosque was not the centre of the political, intellectual, and commercial life. Instead, it was more central to the social and leisurely concerns of Shahjahanabad's inhabitants. The hub of the city, on the other hand, was the palace-fortress. The main markets adjacent to it: it was more central to the material concerns of the inhabitants of the city. The main streets radiated out from it. In the urban design of the city it was

158. G.von Grunebaum, 'The Structure of the Muslim Town', in *Islam: Essays in the Native and Growth of a Cultural Tradition*, Memoir No. 81, The American Anthropological Association, Ann Arbor, 1955, 2nd edn., London, 1961; Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century: The Structures of Everyday Life*, London, 1988, p.509. The concept of an Islamic city has been deconstructed by Janet L. Abu Logod in 'The Islamic City - Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 19, 1987, pp.155-75.

the principal point of planning with the Jama'i Masjid being the secondary. Its specific location was an expression of the Mughal state's notion of paternalism, of being the centre of its subjects' temporal concerns. To that extent the city marked an ambiguity of relationship vis-a-vis the Jama'i Masjid, an ambiguity that reflected an empirical reality, and one that would mark Shahjahanabad somewhat out of step with the description of a prototype of an Islamic city. If legitimacy in its multifaceted manifestations was the organizing principle of the layout of Shahjahanabad, it clearly embodied the imperial vision. The vision, however, was not quite internalized at the bazaar level, for, even as imperial subject looked wondrously at the mausoleums and monuments, processions and pageantry, and, even as they came to identify the streets and sideways with the sweetheart, the bazaar gossip, recorded by European travellers, continually recycled scandalous stories of the goings on at the Court: people of the bazaar weren't as awe-stuck as the Court and its chroniclers had glibly assumed.

Life in the *Havelis* : The Structural Givens

The structure of a stereotypical modern habitat reflects as well as reinforces far greater individualization of space (and time) than in earlier societies. Each space within it is clearly demarcated for a particular individual in the family and is used for a specific purpose and for a relatively given length of time even as some spaces are earmarked for collective use. Thus the parents' bedroom, the children's room(s), the master's study, the guest-room, the dining space and so forth. The demarcation is reaffirmed through strong doors and thick curtains. On the other hand, the standardization of this pattern would nevertheless suggest societal intrusion in the process of individualization of space and time within the habitat. Life in the medieval habitat, however, was predicated upon a far higher degree of social use of space (and time), which reflected the structure of the family and interpersonal relationships within it.

The structure of the medieval family had a social significance. Defined by patriarchy, interpersonal relationships among its members were regulated by certain well-defined principles in order to fulfil its objectives, maintain order within it, and ensure its survival. The role of each individual was assigned and was strictly specific. They were placed in a highly calibrated super-subordinate system of relationships based on descent line, generation, gender, seniority, and age. Along these distinctions were drawn lines of authority and submission of one over the other, and of responsibilities and obligations towards each other. Relationships amongst the members were socially controlled so that disruptive challenges to the fabric of the family may be contained. Within this context one may explore life within the *havelis* — the abodes of the nobles, the high-born, or the 'respectable' of the medieval society.

The Patriarch

At the head of the family was the patriarch, its provider and protector. His position was symbolized in the architectural layout of the *haveli* where his apartments called the *mardana* (men's apartments) stood at the head¹, providing and protecting the inhabitants within. By virtue of it he owed responsibilities in domains of the family, both public and private, which in the medieval social discourse constructed his honour.

In the public domain the patriarch bestowed upon the family respectability which in medieval times was identified as its social — not material — status and the cultural-moral limits of social status. A concern for this formed the driving force of the public existence of the dwellers of the *havelis* and distinguished them from other social classes. It is this insight which seems to underlay the three volume compilation in the eighteenth century on the biographies of Mughal nobles, *Ma'asir al-Umara* (Marks of Noblemen), by Shah Nawaz Khan.

-
1. For the architectural layout of the *havelis* refer to Map V. The layout, here and below, has been constructed from Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City*, pp.45-9; Dayal, *Alam Mein Intekhab*, pp.17-24; Pavan K. Varma and Sondeep Shankar, *Mansions at Dusk: The Havelis of Old Delhi*, Delhi, 1992, pp.27-34; Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns of India: Description of their Manners, Customs, Habits, and Religious Opinions made during a Twelve Years' Residence in their Immediate Society*, 2 vols., reprint, Delhi, 1973, 1, pp.304-6, 324; Veena Talwar Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow: 1856-1877*, Delhi, 1989, pp.118-20; and my own stay in what is now Old Delhi. Adaptations of the medieval abode's layout are visible in the city's 'modern' houses. Blake conceives the layout of the *havelis* from a modern perspective wherein he divides it into private vs. public space. Since the private and public lives in medieval society intruded upon each other, the space obtaining within its habitat cannot be as clearly separated as in modern society. A more appropriate organising principle of the *havelis*, instead, is a division on the basis of gender.

Himself a nobleman of the highest rank and, therefore, one who knew his class of men best, Shah Nawaz Khan constitutes testimony par excellence for being unselfconscious about it. On the face of it, *Ma'asir al-Umara*, is little more than an extremely prosaic, if painstaking, compilation of the achievements of no less than 731 nobles and reads, as the title indicates, more like a who's who than a critique of them. The work, however, assumes profound significance as one discovers the meanings embedded in it which, also, makes comprehensible the inspiration Shah Nawaz Khan found for undertaking it. It is indeed revealing, and implicates our whole understanding of them, that the achievements of nobles are identified by the author with their social status and its cultural-moral limits. Social status, derived from landed estates and laurels in military wars, translated into bestowals of honours, ranks, distinctions, and privileges by the emperor. It is these acquisitions of the nobles which occupies the attention of Shah Nawaz Khan in the compilation. He records them meticulously, with precision, giving a step by step account of bestowals of ranks, titles, standards, and gifts. So careful is he that not the smallest honour escapes his eye, such as, the gift of a jewelled dagger, a fringed palanquin, a horse with gold trappings, or simply, an elephant or a drum.

In a society where the dividing lines between the public and private were not always very firmly drawn, intimacy with the emperor and his household was a critical instrument of regulating the power and dignity which a noble enjoyed. Shah Nawaz Khan cannot but thoroughly record these intangible acquisitions of status. So sensitive is he that notices are made of bestowals by the person of the emperor such as an embrace, a touch, a visit, or a mere comforting gesture. The social position a noble thus acquired ramified into a detailed protocol in the court. His status encoded in them, the courtier-author must make due notices. Seldom in the chronicle does Shah Nawaz Khan talk of the economic status of the nobles or even their wealth which, we know, could be legendary. It is just rarely the

reference point. Interestingly enough, when the progeny of the nobles achieve nothing 'honourable' or 'distinguished', Shah Nawaz Khan is quick to dismiss them without much ado.

It is significant that social status, as it emerges from the mass of what is *Ma'asir al-Umara*, was a finely graded, complex, delicate, and open-ended mechanism. An absence of classification marked it, making the status of each noble separate and terribly precarious. A small bestowal here or there had ramifications which could alter the social situation of all. In the very fragility of this balance can be gauged the importance of social status in the public existence of nobles inasmuch as it underscores the political importance of it. If it enabled the emperor to muster the loyalty of the nobles, it must also be emphasized that this turbulent sea of bestowals could not have been deployed if it was also not the concern of the latter's public existence. It may be remembered that profound ceremony and solemnity attended the bestowals and that nobles aspired, struggled, and even paid for them.

Having identified the social position of a noble the biographical format of Shah Nawaz Khan enumerates the cultural attributes and moral qualities of the nobles. He showers praise upon them if they are lettered and cultivated, skilled in the arts of aesthetics and warfare. He lauds them if they are loyal to the emperor, just and benevolent, brave and chivalrous, magnanimous and charitable. These appreciations establish the cultural-moral limits of the concern for social status amongst the nobles which, taken together, constituted his social honour. The significance of cultural accomplishments in their lives is reflected in their autonomy: 'Some (nobles) who did not obtain high rank have been noticed on account of their noble qualities', declares Shah Nawaz Khan in the preface to his

work.² Thus the literati of medieval period who, otherwise, came from a middle-class background culturally identified themselves with the aristocrats.³ In other words, status in the medieval society was also a cultural notion. It emerges, from the *Ma'asir al-Umara*, that social status and its cultural-moral limits constituted the legitimacy (and power) of the nobles in the public domain. This placed them on top of the social hierarchy and their existence on a plane altogether refined where fulfillment of material needs was taken for granted and social concerns rested in a world beyond.

It must be emphasized that social status of a noble was not a personal but a family attribute. Once acquired it could traverse upwards and downwards having the attribute of eternity. Shah Nawaz Khan comments, rather, theatrically:

'Many ancestors who had brushed the corner of obscurity have acquired the fame of eternal life as appendages to their celebrated posterity, and many sons and grandsons, who from want of merit did not rise to high office, have had their names blazoned because of their illustrious ancestry.'⁴

This makes comprehensible the concept of lineage/descent (*nasab*) or birth/ancestry which dominated the medieval mind and its identification with social status/honour. Its significance is reflected in its autonomy, that it was one

2. Shah Nawaz Khan, *Ma'asir al-Umara*, 1, p.8.

3. This is evident from the *Shahr Ashob* of the period where the poets identify the decline of the Mughal courtly world as a personal tragedy. Naim Ahmad, *Shahr Ashob ka Tahqiqi Mutala*, Aligarh, 1979, pp.116, 119-127.

4. Shah Nawaz Khan, *Ma'asir al-Umara*, 1, p.8.

of the two fold constituents of the social definition of an aristocrat/high-born, the other being a professional status (*hasab*) resting upon landed estates and military achievements.⁵

In retrospect, observations from the *Ma'asir al-Umara* are attested by a short treatise, *Mirza-Namah*, written in the mid-seventeenth century by, again a nobleman, Mirza Kamran.⁶ The work was a product of its author's 'sense of honour' that was violated when in course of travelling in Hindustan he encountered some people who had 'entitled' themselves with the 'dignity (or rank)' of a *mirza* and he set out to salvage it by putting down the 'rules and regulations' on which the status was 'based'.⁷ These are identifiable as the cultural attributes which make the personality of a *mirza*. As meticulously as Shah Nawaz Khan, and traversing over a wide range, Kamran prescribes the virtues he should possess, conversation he should make, books he should read, games he should play, carriage he should take, style of bath he should practice, town he should like, gem he should value, and fruit or flower he should be fond of.⁸ In lucid terms the prescriptions suggest that a *mirza* should be a believer in God, virtuous, enlightened, lettered, versatile, literary, reserved and restrained in social intercourse, class-conscious, protective of his honour, courteous, modest, and tasteful. It is worth emphasizing that the

-
5. Information on *nasab* and *hasab* has been obtained from a prose work on the contemporary social, cultural, and religious life written by Mirza Qatil, a poet who had lived for several years in Shahjahanabad. The account provides a rare discussion on the social structure of the times. It may be mentioned that, in Mughal times, racial origin was a predominant attribute of the *nasabi* status. Mirza Muhammad Hasan Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, Urdu tr. Muhammad Umar, Delhi, 1968, see Chs. 5 and 6.
 6. Mirza Kamran, "Mirza-Namah", tr. Mawlavi M. Hidayat Husain, in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, New Series, 9, 1913. The translator has clarified that the author is not his namesake, Kamran, brother of Humayun.
 7. *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.
 8. *Ibid.*, pp.3-8.

'rules and regulations' which Kamran provides belong, as in the *Ma'asir al-Umara*, to a realm that is distant from the material world. A contempt for matters of money is unambiguously expressed by him, in a stylized idiom:

'If a *mirza* happens to be in company with some persons of eminence, and if the topic of conversation refers to one's income ..., he should try to get the topic changed; if not, he should leave the house to its owner and run away as fast as his feet can carry him, and must not look back'.⁹

The aversion is reiterated at another place:

'When purchasing a thing wanted by him, he should not make any difficulty about the price, and ought not buy *like traders* (Emphasis added).'¹⁰

The attempt to distinguish themselves from the social class whose driving force was material wealth is evident.

The cultural norms which Kamran lays down for a *mirza* substantiate what has been empirically observed of them in the *Ma'asir al-Umara*. As in it they possess an autonomy, represented here in the *raison d'être* of the treatise, and the author's identification of them with his honour/dignity or rank. The concern of the *Mirza-Namah* are merely the cultural-moral limits of the concern for social status reflected in the *Ma'asir al-Umara* and, therefore, reinforce the thesis that this was the driving force of the public existence of the men who dwelled in the *havelis*.

Having said all this, it would be absurd to assume that status and wealth were exclusive categories; a distinction between them may seem viable only in terms of paradigmatic presence to serve as a heuristic device. Quite apart from the fact that the honourable or refined concerns of the high-born are conceivable only in a context where economic prosperity was not only given but was of a very high order, wealth was important to the self-identity of this class. In a society where

9. Ibid., p.6.

10. Ibid., pp.4-5.

statements were made through visual representations, wealth enabled a distance — and exclusivity — from the mass of the people who were identified with material poverty and physical toil. It facilitated a differentiation from the mercantile class, which was the immediate reference point in the definition of the identity. To be above them in the social hierarchy, the economic power of the latter had to be transcended even as expressing a contempt for their materialism. Thus wealth formed the backbone which placed the high-born on top of the social hierarchy. Shedding light upon it is a passing, but significant, remark made by Shah Nawaz Khan: ‘...wealth (is) accumulated in order to preserve honour, and life was only worth living when it is honourable.’¹¹ Indicating the significance of wealth to the identity of the high-born, Qatil says that the Muslim noble looks down upon a *mansabdar* drawing a salary of ten rupees per month. Yet wealth was not enough, so Qatil observes that an elephant driver is also held in contempt though earning five hundred rupees per month.¹² To qualify as a noble the social status, to recall, had to be drawn from landed estates and military wars. The letters of Ghalib, very self-conscious about his aristocratic origins, wishing friends and acquaintances wealth and honours, clearly underlines the symbiotic relationship between them.¹³ In a poem presented to Bahadur Shah Zafar, the poet writes:

That I am Zafar’s slave is ample honour
Though without wealth or rank or dignity.¹⁴

-
11. Shah Nawaz Khan, *Ma’asir al-Umara*, 2-1, p.547.
 12. Malik, ‘Some Aspects of Culture’, p.44; Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, p.27.
 13. Russell and Islam, eds. and trs., *Ghalib: Life and Letters*, pp.215, 253, 254, 308, 322, 348.
 14. *Ibid.*, p.81.

What distinguishes the concern for wealth in the pre-modern society from the modern capitalist society is that, in the former, accumulation of wealth is subordinate to social status and honour while, in the latter, acquisition of wealth per se becomes the driving force.

Yet this does not quite account for the passion for wealth found amongst the nobles. Inasmuch as it was necessary to bestow upon them a grandeur and therefore a political legitimacy, excessive wealth too became a pointer to the degree of their acceptance in society. In this way they could even distinguish themselves from each other. The meaning of wealth having transmuted to social status in their eyes, its accumulation was perceived as distinction. Pelsaert writes:

I have often ventured to ask great lords what is their true object in being so eager to amass their treasures, when they have gathered is of no use to them or their family. Their answers have been based on the emptiest worldly vanity, for they say it is a very great and imperishable reputation if it is generally known, or the official records show, that such a man left an estate worth so much.¹⁵

The indispensable role of wealth to the definition of their identity and the contempt for materialism amongst the nobles seems reconciled in their sumptuous and extravagant life-style. Yet, wealth for them was important as the means for extravagance, not as an economic investment for the production of still more wealth.

It were the representations of the aristocrats or the high-born which was the underlying metaphor organising the medieval social structure. On one side were positioned the *ashrafs* — the high-born — on the other were the *razils* — the

15. Francisco Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India: The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, tr. W.H. Moreland and P. Geyl, Delhi, p.55.

low-born.¹⁶ The bipolarism, having no recognition for the economic status of the mercantile class, reflects, that it was class as a cultural notion that was the theoretical ideal of the medieval social order. The existential reality, however, was far more complex and had other hierarchical variables.¹⁷

What social status and its attributes meant to the *havelis* is poignantly illustrated in Ghalib's letters written when the world of its men was withering. His stature as a great philosophical poet notwithstanding, Ghalib constantly evokes his ancestry to assert his identity.¹⁸ The letters display an obsession with his honours and distinctions that were increasingly being threatened under the new political dispensation. A stream of anxiety runs through them, fearing withdrawal, or, hoping restoration.¹⁹ In a letter written to a friend in December 1859, the period when the British *darbar* was to be held and the fate of his honours discussed, Ghalib writes:

‘My friend, you keep on and on about the pension, but... it's the durbar and the robe of honour that worries me to death...’²⁰

As an unconscious reflection — which only enhances the importance — it is his honours that are more important to the penurious poet than the pension. His anxiety betrays a helplessness in face of conditions that brought ruination to the class he belonged to, and desperation to salvage whatever could possibly be salvaged. This is what honours and distinctions spelled, this is what his ancestry signified: loss of them meant a loss of his class and therefore his social legitimacy,

16. Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, see Chs. 5 and 6; also Imtiaz Ahmad, ‘The Ashraf-Ajlaf Dichotomy in Muslim Structure in India’, *Economic and Social History Review*, 3, 3, 1966.

17. See Ahmad above.

18. Russell and Islam, eds. and trs., *Ghalib: Life and Letters*, see p.27.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 171, 198, 210-1, 218-9, 225, 246, 282-3.

20. *Ibid.*, p.225.

and power. Thus the poet, arriving at Delhi College to appear for a teaching job interview, returned from the gates because no one was present to receive him with due honour!²¹

The patriarch discharged his public responsibilities from the apartments where he dwelled viz. the *mardana*. Performance of public duties from the *mardana* only reflects upon the invasion in the medieval abodes of the public into the private and vice-versa.

In the private domain of the family the responsibility of the patriarch entailed upon him to provide and protect it by ensuring its biological and social replication. This was the *raison d'être* of the inhabitants of the *havelis* earthly existence. Biological replication involved perpetuation of the family blood line/name through a male heir born of legitimate marriage. Its social replication obliged him to provide for its well-being materially and socially. This meant its sustenance, settling the children of his household in terms of livelihood and marriage, and protecting the honour of its women, for his own honour — and power — critically rested upon it.²²

21. For full details of the incident, see Russell and Islam, eds. and trs., *Ghalib: Life and Letters*, pp.62-3.

22. Ellison Banks Findly, *Nur Jahan: Empress of Mughal India*, New York, 1993, pp.88-9. Reflecting upon women as a pivotal source of male honour/power is a statement of Jahangir: 'I sent back Dust Muhammad... to take charge of the fort of Agra and the *zenana* and the treasuries'. Jahangir, *Tuzuk*, 1, p.57; Hanna Papanek, 'Purdah: Separate Worlds and Symbolic Shelter', pp.38-9; Sylvia Vatuk, 'Purdah Revisited: A Comparison of Hindu and Muslim Interpretations of the Cultural Meaning of Purdah in South Asia', p.59; in Hanna Papanek and Gail Minault, eds., *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia*, Delhi, 1982.

Women

Women were necessary to patriarchy, but being the other were constructed as a threat by it. This impelled regulating them in ways which had the purposes of subordinating them to its concerns.

If men were the protectors, women became the protected. The architectural layout of the *haveli* encoded the relationship where the women's apartments, known as the *zenana*, lay behind the men's apartments, shielded and protected. They were segregated on the basis of gender and assigned roles that were of secondary or supportive value. Their responsibilities belonged to the private domain of the family which involved domesticity and child-rearing. This had the purpose of excluding them from the public domain of men and the power and resources obtaining within it. The distribution of roles between men and women, if complementary, was therefore asymmetrical. The hierarchical organisation of the family within the *havelis* was similarly asymmetrical. The patriarchal order had made the female line of descent inferior to the male line. In distributing authority within the family, women were placed a notch below the corresponding male role where a grandfather had more authority than a grandmother, a brother more than sister, and so forth.²³ Incorporation of women within the patriarchal fold along these lines had implications which subjugated them in yet another way. It appropriated their time which came to be distributed around the axis of men's concerns.

The objectives of medieval Indian patriarchy demanded subjugation of women's sexuality for it had the potential of challenging it by disrupting the blood

23. Position of women under the patriarchal order has been constructed from: Papanek, 'Purdah: Separate Worlds'; Vatuk, 'Purdah Revisited'; Doranne Jacobson, 'Purdah and the Hindu Family in Central India'; in Papanek and Minault, eds., *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah*.

line through illegitimate heirs.²⁴ This impelled controls over it which, in the *havelis*, took an excessive form. Informed by the concept of seclusion, the controls segregated women as a category and put them behind the *pardah*, the intensity of which increased up the social scale.²⁵ The *zenana* — a separate space — was laid out to which they were physically consigned. Deep within the *haveli* walls, the *zenana* was so located that not a stray glance of a man could reach it. Infact, the entire structure of the medieval abode — high walls, blank facade, only a lofty gateway, no surrounding open space, inverted in other words — seemed to manifest their seclusion. The sentiment was echoed by Tavernier who found the *havelis*: 'large enclosures, in the middle of which is the dwelling, so that no one can approach the place where the women are shut up.'²⁶ It was represented in their forbidding, fort-like appearance.²⁷ Thus it was popularly said: inside a *haveli* "*parinda bhi par nahin maar sakta hai*" (even a bird cannot flutter its wings).²⁸

Access of men to the *zenana* was severely restricted, open only to the husband or the closest kins. Says Roe: '(The Mahometans) are very Jelous to let their weomen... be seene...'²⁹ Forbes comments: '...they (Hindoo women) are never seen by those who visit the master of the family... and are not permitted... to

24. This has been discussed below in Ch.4.

25. Findly, *Nur Jahan*, 1993, pp.89-90; Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India, 1526-1748*, Delhi, 1967, pp.134-5; Zinat Kausar, *Muslim Women in Medieval India*, Delhi, 1992, pp.293-4; Pushpa Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century Northern India*, Delhi, 1977, p.72; Raghuvanshi, *Indian Society in the Eighteenth Century*, p.109.

26. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels*, 1, pp.78-9.

27. See above Ch.1, Part II, p. 56.

28. Varma and Shankar, *Mansions at Dusk*, p.27.

29. William Foster, ed., *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615-1619, As Narrated in His Journal and Correspondence*, 2 vols., London, 1899, 1, p.21.

associate with other men.³⁰ Should a physician's visit be necessary, the patient was diagnosed — howsoever inaccurately — by the pulse or having the symptoms described by servants.³¹ Lest their anatomy be divined by the tailors, clothes of the *zenana* were sown by women within its walls.³² Were its inmates to move out, which was occasionally the case, it was always within the seclusion of a well-escorted palanquin (*palki*). One's name gives the final shape to one's person and is as physical an entity as the body; by veiling her name the patriarchal order sealed its physical seclusion of women. Inayat Khan comments:

'Ever since the reign of the Emperor Akbar, it had been ordained that the inmates of the *seraglio* should not be mentioned in public, but that they should be designated by some epithet, derived either from the place of their birth or their country or city in which they may have first been regarded by the monarch with the eye of affection...'³³

If seclusion of women displayed a distrust of all men, even the closest in consanguinity or affinity, then a vigilance over their sexuality exhibited a distrust of all women, even the closest as a wife. European chroniclers, fascinated by the seclusion in the Orient, enable us to build a comprehensive account at the imperial level — a level where the controls were severest and which served as the model for the rest of the society to emulate. Guards who were eunuchs, upon pain of

-
30. James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, 1, p.75. The restriction over men's entry into the *zenana* is mentioned in the citations of nos. and .
31. Gail Minault, 'Other Voices, Other Rooms: The View from the *Zenana*', in Nita Kumar, ed., *Women as Subjects*, Delhi, 1994, p.116.
32. Fanny Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque during Four and Twenty Years in the East with Revelations of Life in the Zenana*, 2 vols., London, 1850, 2, p.113.
33. Inayat Khan, *Shahjahan-Namah*, pp.447-8; also Kausar, *Muslim Women in Medieval India*, p.294.

punishment, were appointed to vigil them.³⁴ Quite apart from their biological expediency, psychologically these sexless beings would have been disposed to execute their task best. Deprived of their own sexuality they would have been malicious enough to deprive others! Manucci's delight in all kinds of lurid happenings — real or imagined — attracted him to the means by which women of the imperial *seraglio* were kept away from the object of their desire. According to him, all who went in or out of the *seraglio* were under strong vigilance. Should even a woman visit, she was searched thoroughly; the eunuchs paying no regard to her rank or position. What forced them to such measures was the 'continual fear in which they exist that some man in disguise might enter in female dress.'³⁵ Names of all menials were registered at every gate of the *seraglio* they passed from and a descriptive roll taken. The information was circulated to other eunuchs required to conduct these men out in order to ensure that the same person left. 'All this' remarks Manucci 'is for fear of anyone remaining inside, or any change being made.'³⁶ When the physician visited a heavy cloak was thrown over him, and blinded he was led to the patient who, save the afflicted part, was curtained off.³⁷ All things that went into the *seraglio* were also screened so that objects that could serve as instruments of sexual gratification may not be smuggled in, such as

-
34. Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, p.65; Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.328; also Abul Fazl, *Ain*, 1, p.47.
35. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.328; Abul Fazl provides the administrative aspect of the measure. Abul Fazl, *Ain*, 1, p.47.
36. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.328.
37. The information is derived from the personal experiences of Bernier and Manucci who as physicians were called to treat the imperial women. Bernier, *Travels*, p.267; Manucci, *Storia*, 2, pp.328-9.

radishes, cucumbers, or similar vegetables.³⁸ Much earlier, Thomas Coryat, writing of *Nauroz* festival, observed that care had to be taken with items brought into the fair:

‘...whatsoever is brought in (the *seraglio*) of virill shape, as instance in reddishes, so great is the jealousy, and so frequent the wickedness of this people, that they are cut and jagged for feare of converting the same to some unnaturall abuse.’³⁹

The doors of the *seraglio* apartments were fastened and, interestingly not from inside but from outside.⁴⁰ Its chief doors were closed at sunset, while the principal door was sealed and guarded.⁴¹ Torches were kept burning all night and matrons kept vigilance at the doors.⁴² The enormity of the measures with which medieval patriarchy sought to guard the sexuality of its women betrays not only an obsession with their chastity but also an extreme nervousness, even paranoia, in face of it.

This manifested in the cultural discourse of the times where chastity is constructed as the core attribute of women. The concern is eloquently represented before us in the chronicles where the imperial women are projected as chaste. In the *Shahjahan-Namah* can be obtained its handsome articulation. Writing of the Emperor’s betrothals, Inayat Khan comments:

‘During the second year of the emperor Jahangir’s reign, when His Majesty had crossed the fifteenth year of his age..., he was betrothed by the Emperor to Her Majesty Arjumand Bano Begam, the *virgin* daughter of Abu’l Hasan, known as Asif Khan.’⁴³

38. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.328.

39. Thomas Coryat in Foster, *Early Travels*, pp.278-9.

40. William Finch in Foster, *Early Travels*, p.163.

41. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.328; Abul Fazl, *Ain*, 1, p.46.

42. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.328.

43-50. Inayat Khan, *Shahjahan-Namah*, pp.5, 5, 309, 70, 270, 333, 261, 476. Emphasis added in all citations.

Further:

'In the fourth year of his reign, the late Emperor also betrothed His Majesty to the *virgin* daughter of Mirza Muzaffar Husain Safawi...'⁴⁴

Narrating the accident of the Emperor's daughter, Jahan-Ara, with fire he says:

'After bidding His Majesty goodnight, that *sun of modesty* was proceeding to her own sleeping apartment when the border of her *chaste* garment brushed against a lamp...'⁴⁵

Modesty, it appears, was an attribute of a 'virtuous' woman in the medieval cultural discourse which unambiguously equates virtuousness with sexual chastity, a biological function with social morality. While describing the death of the Emperor's Queen, Mumtaz Mahal, the biographer comments:

'This *treasury of chastity* was buried temporarily in a pavilion in the garden of Zainabad at Burhanpur, which is situated on the other side of the river Tapti.'⁴⁶

The imperial widows and mothers are presented by him, in a similar vein: 'After it was made known that Saif Khan had died a natural death in the province of Bengal..., His Majesty repaired to the residence of that *seat of chastity* Malika Banu Begam, widow of the deceased noble and elder sister to Her late Majesty the Queen...'⁴⁷ Thus recounting the death of Nur Jahan, the widow of Jahangir, and the Queen Dowager, he remarks: 'This renowned Begam was the *chaste* daughter of I'timad al-Daula and sister of the late Yamin al-Daula.'⁴⁸

The veil, standing for chastity, is the predominant metaphor used for women in the chronicles. Writing of the death of Mumtaz Mahal's mother, Inayat Khan says:

'About this time, the venerable mother of Her late Majesty the Queen sank beneath the *veil of dust*, and His Majesty paid a visit of condolence to the mansion of Yamin al-Daula Khan Khanan.'⁴⁹

And of the death of the Emperor's aunt:

'In these days, it reached the sublime ear that the illustrious Lady *veiled behind the curtains of empire and sovereignty*, namely His Majesty's maternal aunt Shakka Nisa Begam, who from excess of affection and fondness had started from the metropolis of Akbarabad towards Shahjahanabad for the purpose of meeting the monarch of the universe, had on the 1st of Safar 1063 (1 January 1653)... migrated from the world...⁵⁰

To so construct the sexuality of women implied its ideological subjugation even as a perception of them as sacred secluded them beyond the profane world of sensuality. Dow writes:

'Women are so sacred in India, that even the common soldiery leave them unmolested in the midst of slaughter and devastation... The haram is a sanctuary against all the licentiousness of victory; and ruffians, covered with the blood of a husband, shrink back with confusion from the secret apartments of his wives.'⁵¹

Dubois remarks: '... among the Hindus the person of the women is sacred.' Her dwelling, 'even the hut of the most helpless widow' was an 'inviolable asylum into which the most determined libertine would never dare to penetrate...'⁵² The perception manifested at the existential level where the *zenana* was considered a sacred space.⁵³

Then, seclusion itself had implications which only reinforced it. A whole culture evolved where men never as much as talked of the *zenana* or its inmates. Their sexual chastity was identified as their honour, and of the family.

-
51. Alexander Dow, *The History of Hindustan*, 3 vols., Delhi, reprint 1973, 3, pp.XIX-XX.
 52. Abbe J.A. Dubois, *Letters on the State of Christianity in India*, London, 1823, pp.184, 187.
 53. The sacred status of the *zenana* is reflected in the signifiacance of the term harem has in Islam as being a place of worship. Jahangir, *Tuzuk*, 1, p.73; Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, pp.379, 425.

In contrast, the sexual freedom of the medieval men was extensive and expansive, which received an informal expression in the institution of the courtesan.

Subjugation of women was, therefore, of an abject form. This translated itself into the ideals prescribed for them by the patriarchal order. An ideal woman was one who belonged to the 'hermetically sealed respectability' of the *pardah*: she left her father's home only when she was carried out in a wedding palanquin and left her husband's home only when she was carried on her bier.⁵⁴ Her identity was drawn with reference to the men: she was a daughter, a wife, or a mother. In these roles she was to be dutiful and 'virtuous' which meant: self-sacrificing, self-effacing, compassionate, and generous. She was even-tempered and kept peace amongst the family members. She was religious and charitable. At the core of the attributes lay her sexual chastity. Around these evolved a detailed feminine etiquette which had the implication of not only confining — and prescribing — the identity of a woman but circumscribing her entire manners, behaviour, and comportment.⁵⁵ To sum up, the ideals entailed upon her to be a woman of

54. Minault, 'Others Voices, Other Rooms', p.108.

55. For the attributes of an ideal woman and feminine etiquette see n.3; also Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, pp.58-9, 61, 63-5; Raghuvanshi, *Indian Society in the Eighteenth Century*, pp.105-7; Zarina Bhatti, 'Socializing of the Female Muslim Child in Uttar Pradesh', in Karuna Chanana, ed., *Socialization Education and Women: Explorations in Gender Identity*, Delhi, 1988. The attributes are explicitly stated in the women's reformist literature written in the later nineteenth century viz. Altaf Husain Hali, *Majalis-un-Nissa*, Delhi, 1993; Nazir Ahmad Dehlavi, *Taubat-un-Nusuh*, Delhi, 1993; Nazir Ahmad, *Mirat-ul-Urus*, Lucknow, 1983; Nazir Ahmad, *Banat-ul-Nash*, Lucknow, 1927; also Barbara D. Metcalfe, 'The Making of a Muslim Lady: Maulana Thanawi's *Bihishti Zewar*', in Milton Israel and N.K. Wagle, ed., *Islamic Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor Aziz Ahmad*, Delhi, 1983; Barbara Metcalfe, 'Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi and Urdu Literature', in Christopher Shackleton, ed., *Urdu and Muslim South Asia*, Delhi, 1991.

'minimal transactions', one not 'concerned with maximising exchanges, building up relationships and networks, creating clients and patrons, offering and receiving food, gifts, money, one's very substance.'⁵⁶ She must guard her honour. She must restrict social interaction. She must measure her words... She must limit her worship to God alone. She should eat little. She should pay her due but not dispense largesse casually and without just desert.⁵⁷

The subordination/subjugation of women by the medieval patriarchal structure generated an image of them which suggests that they had internalized the norms ordained by it. Mirrored before us in the European accounts, the image represents them as obedient wives, dutiful daughters, affectionate mothers, kind mistresses, sincere friends, charitable and zealous in the performance of their religious duties. They were examples of chastity and conjugal fidelity. Devoted to the husband, they feared, honoured, and worshipped him like a god. Subject to his will, they were completely dependent on him. Secluded from the world they had no intellectual enjoyments, their pursuits trifling, and their amusements childish.⁵⁸

Needless to say the image is stereotypical but, significantly enough, continues to influence social historians and feminist writers.

-
56. McKim Marriott, 'Hindu Transactions: Diversity without Dualism', in Bruce Kapferer, ed., *Transactions and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behaviour*, Philadelphia, 1976. The quoted is Metcalfe, 'Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi and Urdu Literature', in Shackle, ed., *Urdu and Muslim South Asia*, p.99.
57. Metcalfe, 'Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi and Urdu Literature', in Shackle, ed., *Urdu and Muslim South Asia*, p.99.
58. Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, p.65; Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, 1, pp.73, 74, 75, vol.2, pp.518-9, vol.3, p.269; Dubois, *Letters on the State of Christianity*, pp.192-3; Robert Orme, *Historical Fragments of the Mughal Empire*, London, 1782, p.465; Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.314.

Conjugal Relationship

Conjugal relationship within the *havelis* was informed by the structure of the medieval family and compulsions to safeguard it from disintegration. The medieval family conceived as an extended and interdependent unit⁵⁹ required, for its survival, that each unit it was composed of subordinate its ties of interest and affection. This concern militated against any form of individualistic pattern of relationship from emerging which had the potential to disrupt the fabric of the family. To pre-empt it, conjugal relationship was marked by social invasion. Upon these fundamentals intruded, on the one hand, the rigid segregation of roles between sexes and, on the other, the seclusion of women. This complex defined the contours of the relationship which emerged between the conjugal partners.

At the outset, matrimony itself was a matter that was arranged by the parents⁶⁰, for whom, it was a question of families — not individuals — coming together for social purposes. The man and woman were intended to be the master and lady of the household rather than the individualistic 'husband' and 'wife' for each other. Social character of the conjugal relationship is manifest in the distribution of space and time between the conjugal partners. It is significant that the distribution of space within the *haveli* has none marked for the conjugal partners as a 'bedroom' is in the modern habitat; the husband and the wife were no individuals bound to each other by ties of matrimony. They were part of a larger, more assertive unit. Similarly, distribution of time reveals none assigned for conjugal partners. This is apparent in how the men of the *havelis* spent their day. Describing a usual day in the life of a noble, Pelsaert writes:

59. The countless references to nuclear households one comes across indicate that the concept of family as an extended unit in medieval times was more a cultural concept.

60. Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, p.74.

'Here (*diwan khana*) the lord takes his seat in the morning to attend to his business, whatever it is and here all his subordinates come to salaam him... . After saluting, they take seats appropriate to their position in a row on each side of the host, and that so humbly that they seem unlike themselves... and no one will move from his place, though they should sit the whole day... . Everyone leaves as soon as he has obtained an answer to his request, but friends, acquaintances, and persons of position remain until the lord retires into the house (*zenana*), or unless the audience is prolonged until meal time, though there are no fixed hours for meals... . Alike at midday and in the evening the guests rise and take their leave with scanty compliments saying merely, God grant a lasting blessing on the house! and the host then goes into the *mahal* (*zenana*) to sleep until the evening, when he usually comes out again to the sitting place (*diwan khana*).⁶¹

The noble's day is thus absorbed by his public duties, sociability in men's company, or interests that had little to do with his women. He visits his women's apartments purely for functional purposes as a meal, or to sleep.

Ghalib, on the other hand, is seen to visit his wife's apartments only for meals whilst sleeping in his own apartment which, interestingly, was some distance away from her *zenana*. Otherwise, the poet's day is spent writing letters to his many friends and acquaintances, going through their literary products, creating his own, or socializing with friends — only men — dropping in.⁶² Similarly, in Ahmad Ali's novel⁶³, Mir Nihal functions from his own apartment which, like Ghalib's, was detached from the main dwelling space of the *haveli*⁶⁴, and visits Begam Nihal's apartment for meals or when she sends for him. His

61. Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, pp.67-8.

62. Russell and Islam, trs. and eds., *Ghalib: Life and Letters*.

63. *Twilight in Delhi* has sought to recreate the life of Old Delhi by focussing upon the happenings within the *haveli* of Mir Nihal.

64. Papanek mentions that in the villages of Punjab and Baluchistan there may be a separate men's house in one part of the locality or in the family compound of a leading villager. Papanek, 'Purdah: Separate Worlds,' p.9.

routine begins with pigeon-fancying, public duties through the day, pigeon-fancying in the evening, socializing with friends⁶⁵, and ends with a visit to his mistress. Shamshuddin, his married son, sleeping in the *zenana* notwithstanding, day routine, like his father's, has no time assigned for his young wife and has to constantly steal it to be with her. This seems to follow a tradition, for a wife of Humayun, Bega Begam is found complaining to the Emperor:

"For several days now you have been paying visits in this garden, and on no one day have you been to our house. Thorns have not been planted in the way to it. We hope you will deign to visit our quarters also, and to have a party and sociable gathering there, too. How long will you think it right to show all these disfavours to us helpless ones? We too have hearts. Three times you have honoured other places by visits, and you have run day and night into one in amusement and conversation."⁶⁶

Women, on the other hand, spent their day on the many households chores and skills. There was the mandatory cooking, sewing, mending — much of which they did themselves — and supervision of servants. Embroidery was a routine skill amongst them. Households maintenance needed to be carried out constantly: quilts recovered and restuffed, clothes aired, cooking pots enameled, stoves replastered, roofs and walls checked for leaks, water vessels maintained and so forth. The list of household skills and daily concerns was 'endless' and kept women busy from dawn to dusk. There were the illnesses, visits, marriages in the *haveli*

65. Papanek says that exclusive male sociability is marked in the cities and villages of Pakistan. Papanek, 'Purdah: Separate Worlds,' p.31; Vatuk, 'Purdah Revisited' p.72.

66. Gulbadan Begam, *Humayun-Namah*, p.130.

life which had to be taken care of. Much of their time was spent in popular practices which fended off disaster, charmed away spirits, and warded off evil. Sociability, obviously, was amongst themselves.⁶⁷

Men and women of the *havelis* thus inhabited separate realms. This is symbolized in the existence of languages distinct to them, where the *Begmati Zaban* evolved as the feminine genre of the Urdu language spoken by the men. It is emphasized in the colloquial and earthy idiomatic usages of the *Begmati Zaban* which contrasted with the formal, flowery, and Persianized phrases of Urdu.⁶⁸

By not assigning separate space and time to the conjugal partners, medieval family ideology was able to exercise a control over the growth of intimacy between them and subvert an individualistic pattern of relationship from emerging which could potentially disrupt the fabric of the family. Implicit in this was a control over its sexual partnership which betrayed a terrible fear of sex to nurture personal intimacy and presage the disruption. But sexual relationship was necessary for procreation, the very essence of a medieval marriage. How was then,

67. Women's time comes through best in the reformist literature referred to in n. 5 and literary novels namely, Ahmad Ali, *Twilight in Delhi*, Bombay, 1966; Rama Mehta, *Inside the Haveli*, Delhi, 1994. To express myself I have, however, largely used Minault's summary. Minault, 'Other Voices, Other Rooms', pp. 116, 114. Describing the norms of male behaviour for Muslim community in the locality of Hazrat Nizamuddin in Delhi, Patricia Jeffery writes: 'The home is the world of women, and not a suitable place for men and boys to dally in beyond sleeping, washing, and eating: the menfolks should show proper respect by spending little time there'. Jeffery, *Frogs in a Well: Indian Women in Purdah*, Delhi, 1979, p.104, in Vatuk, 'Purdah Revisited', p.72.

68. The *Begmati Zaban* in the nineteenth century provoked linguistic works namely, Muhiyuddin Hasan, *Dilli Ki Begmati Zaban*, Delhi, 1976; Mir Inshaullah Khan "Insha", *Darya-i Latafat*, Urdu tr. Brajmohan Dattatreya "Kaifi" Dehlavi, ed. Abdul Haq, Delhi, 1988; also Minault, 'Begmati Zaban: Women's Language and Culture in Nineteenth Century Delhi', *India International Quarterly*, 9, 2, 1984.

in the *havelis*, this indispensable function reconciled with the threat it posed? The solution was to allow space for it and, simultaneously, enforce controls over it, as the novel of Ahmad Ali, *Twilight in Delhi*, supported by anthropological researches suggests.

In the *haveli* of Mir Nihal dwell three conjugal partners, units of an extended family, the sleeping arrangements of whom are rather instructive. As mentioned earlier, Mir Nihal, the patriarch and the master, lives all the time in his own apartments, away from Begam Nihal. His son, Shamsuddin, whose marriage is very young, is found sleeping along with his wife in the courtyard of the main dwelling space, where the rest of the family is. The most recently married son, Asghar, and his bride, Bilqueece, on the other hand, have a separate space for themselves. These relationships, at different stages of conjugal maturity, reflect the inclusion of sexual partnership in wedlock even as it was subjected to progressive controls.

Asghar and Bilqueece have been given a separate space, for, their marriage being new and arranged would require that its sexual partnership be activated. This is the only time in Mir Nihal's *haveli* that sexual partnership of a conjugal relationship receives overt recognition. The location of the space, however, establishes controls over it at the outset. On the terrace, away from the main dwelling space, and associating with a sense of shame,⁶⁹ it spelled the reservations — and controls — on the partnership. It is interesting that the use of the space by Asghar and Bilqueece figures in the novel until procreation happens, suggesting, that controls over their sexual partnership would have expanded after it, had they

69. The association of shame with sexual partnership of the conjugal relationship has been elucidated upon by Doranne Jacobson and Sylvia Vatuk. Jacobson, 'Purdah and Hindu Family', p.98; Vatuk, 'Purdah Revisited', p.74.

not established a separate living arrangement for themselves. Procreation, however, merely enabled to formally draw a line, for, the marriage of Shamshuddin which hadn't succeeded in procreating had been brought under greater sexual controls as demonstrated in its sleeping arrangements. It seems that once the sexual partnership of a matrimonial relationship had been activated, space allowed for it became restricted leaving enough to make procreation possible.⁷⁰

With the enhancement of controls the association of shame over sexual partnership would also have grown. With every procreation the space allowed for it would have become narrower and once the creation of family was complete the very concept of it was subjected to erasure. This is demonstrated in Mir Nihal, as in case of the aged Ghalib, dwelling — awake and asleep — in his own apartment, away from his wife's *zenana*. Clearly the association of shame with the sexual partnership between husband and wife has magnified over time and the married partners are finally the master and lady of the household as the marriage intended them to be. If at a stage when the marriage could scarcely disrupt the fabric of the family the very concept of the partnership was sought to be effaced⁷¹ it was because the regulation of it required that the elders of the family enforce the norm of

70. Shedding light upon the social determination of sexual aspect of the conjugal relationship is Papanek who found that in the joint families of Punjab the timing of visits to the wife's bed controlled by an older woman. In one of them a glass of butter-milk was customarily given to the men each evening by the oldest woman of the household. The man who did not get the butter-milk knew that it was his turn to go to his wife while the other men slept in the men's house. Papanek, 'Separate Worlds and Symbolic Shelter', p.31.

71. The erasure of the concept of sexual partnership of a conjugal relationship is reflected in the rural children of western U.P. rarely addressing their mother by the correct kin term, *ma*. Instead they address her either as *bobbo* or *bibi* (elder sister) or as *bhabhi* (elder brother's wife). Vatuk, 'Purdah Revisited', p.74.

reservation over it, and they best start with themselves. The social invasion of the sexual relationship, on the obverse side, could make sexual activity itself lose privacy in certain circumstances.

In this context the relationship between the conjugal partners could not but be formalized, exhibiting a weakness at the individual but strength at the institutional level. The life of the relationship, gleaned coherently from the literary novels, may be illustrated herewith from that between Mir Nihal and Begam Nihal. The daily communication between the two moves around their roles, i.e., the family and its concerns. Outside it their lives really belong to their separate worlds of the *mardana* and *zenana*. A conjugal life of many years notwithstanding, the forms of hierarchy defining the relationship are adhered to. An illustration is a scene in the novel where the Mir makes his routine visit to the *zenana* for dinner. Upon entering the *deodhi* (vestibule) of his *haveli* he coughs mildly to apprise the Begam of his arrival so that she may assume appropriate forms of hierarchy before him.⁷² The Begam who is lounging on the bed in her courtyard, hearing of Mir, sits up, covers her head with the head-cloth,⁷³ and calls out to the maid: 'Dilchain, O Dilchain, get up. The master has come.' All these forms, and the stir, upon Mir Nihal's arrival represent the subordination of women in the patriarchal order. As a subordinate the Begam does not share the dinner with the Mir but ensures that he is served properly. At the individual level Mir Nihal appears closer to his mistress, Babban Jan, whom he visits everyday, provides for, and whose death so

72. See Jacobson for men signalling their entrance this way and the women acting accordingly. The forms of hierarchy varied with the relationship the women had with each man. Jacobson, 'Purdah and the Hindu Family', p.92; Vatuk, 'Purdah Revisited', p.65.

73. Covering of head encoded subordinate status or respect for seniority, just as, not sharing meals, standing, form of sitting, etc.

overwhelms him with grief that he takes retirement from active public life. Yet Mir Nihal appears to have a harmonious relationship with his wife, just as other medieval men with co-wives, concubines, and favourites.

The distance between the conjugal partners, and their commitment, not to the individual, but to the institution of marriage denied the relationship transparency. A story from the *Humayun-Namah* provides merely the pretext. It so happened, that when Humayun and his wife, Hamida Banu, were in exile in Persia, he entrusted to her care an amulet case containing rubies. Leaving the case on the bed, Hamida Banu, went for a wash only to be informed on her return by the Emperor that some of the rubies were stolen. She became terribly distressed, for, only Humayun and she in know of the rubies, she feared that the Emperor might suspect her, and turns for help to her brother. The words in which she pleaded him are telling:

‘If at this pinch you will act the brother to me and will make inquiry in some way quietly, you will save me from what one may call disgrace. Otherwise, so long as I live, I shall be ashamed in the royal presence.’⁷⁴

It is significant that despite being husband and wife and having a mature marriage, a lack of trust inhabited the relationship of Humayun and Hamida Banu. It is also important to know that in this crisis it is her brother that Hamida Banu trusts and not her husband. The whole idiom in which she expresses herself only underscores the formalized nature of her relationship with her husband. It follows, then, that the emotional dynamics of the conjugal relationship too were strong at the institutional but weak at the individual level.

Such role-specific and distant relationship would be so linear and predictable that they would have little to talk about. This explains why wives

74. Gulbadan Begam, *Humayun-Namah*, p.172.

figure in only incidentally in works produced by the men, as the memoir of the emperor Babur, or the autobiography of the poet Mir Taqi Mir⁷⁵, or the letters of Ghalib. Nur Jahan, however, figures in more prominently in Jahangir's memoir, signifying that the Emperor's relationship with her was in many ways out of the ordinary.

The social invasion of the conjugal relationship had the implication of subordinating women more than men. Unlike women, men could always sublimate their instincts for love, companionship, and sex that was free from social controls in the courtesans' abodes. Thus the courtesan institution only strengthened the medieval patriarchy.

Children

Objectives of the medieval family had made adult society its model. Children of the *havelis* were therefore shaped towards it and came to be looked upon, not as individuals, but as little adults. This is well-demonstrated in the medieval children ascending thrones, leading campaigns, receiving titles or paying homage, and being married off. The Mughal miniature paintings depict them virtually in no other role except that of an adult, such as hunting or as a courtier. Childhood is not a theme in the artists repertoire nor in that of the medieval poets; the sole exception being Surdas who celebrates Krishna's childhood, but in a stereotypical image of a child's playfulness and mischiefs. In the imperial family a child (son) was looked upon as an adult the very day he was born. Manucci writes:

'The same day (of birth) he (Emperor)... fixes his allowance, which is always more than that given to the highest general in the army.'⁷⁶

75. Mir Taqi Mir, *Zikr-i Mir*, Urdu tr. Nisar Ahmad Faruqi as *Mir Ki Ap Biti*, Delhi, 1957.

76. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.320.

The celebration of the child's (son) birth anniversary (*saalgirah*) was, instead of children's, more of an adult's affair⁷⁷ which accorded recognition not to the child for his growing years but to the adults for his advancement to take over their roles. Gifts given on occasions rejoicing events of the child's life were presentations not to them but to — or meant for — the adults taking the form of money and jewels, or adult items made miniature as a necklace, a bangle, or any other ornament.⁷⁸ That the birth anniversary of the son and not the daughter was celebrated reinforces the concept of children as little adults because the demands of patriarchy — and therefore of adult society — called for it. Children were attired in adult styles made mini, and in the self-same 'rich style'.⁷⁹

The perception of children as little adults is reflected in their socialization even as it shaped them towards the roles and ways of adults. Thus in the imperial family — a level where the pressures of adult roles on children was strongest — sons could be taken out to the hunt or the battlefield; scenes of combat and bloodshed enfolded before their impressionable minds. Writing of imperial princes when small, Manucci comments:

Usually to amuse them they have acted before them many comedies, or their teachers conduct before them legal argumentations, actions at law, or some imbroglio, after which judgements are pronounced. They show them combats and fights and similar things, the whole with a view to their having, should they ever obtain rule, some knowledge of their world's business, and be able to judge in every matter with discernment and without passion.⁸⁰

77. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 2, see p.11.

78. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 2 pp.9-10; Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.320.

79. This is illustrated in the paintings; Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 2, p.9.

80. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, 324.

Children could be made to memorize an illustrious geneology/lineage howsoever lengthy.⁸¹ They were taken to the mosque, could read the Quran correctly when just nine⁸², and may be made to go through the rigours of *Ramzaan* fast, sometimes with dire consequences.⁸³ All this displays a remarkable ignorance and suppression of the childhood of their minds and emotions. Their behaviour was sought to be moulded on that of adults and, internalizing it, they are found to behave like them. William Hawkins provides a story wherein the child Shahryar, Jahangir's son, grooming in princely ways had so effected him that it smothered his natural reactions:

'This King (Jahangir) amongst his children hath one called Sultan Shariar, of seven yeers of age; and his father on a day, being to goe some whether to solace himselfe, demanded of him whether hee would goe with him. The child answered that if it pleased His Highnesse he would either goe or stay, as the pleasure of his father was. But because his answer was not that with all his heart he would waite upon His Majestie, he was very well buffeted by the King, and that in such sort that no child in the world but would have cryed, which this child did not. Wherefore his father demanded why he cryed not. He answered that his nurses told him that it was the greatest shame in the world for princes to cry when they were beaten; and ever since they nurtured me in this kind, saith he, I never cryed, and nothing shall make me cry to the death. Upon which speech his father, being more vexed, stroke him againe, and caused a bodkin to bee brought him, which he thrust through his cheeke; but all this would not make him cry, although he bled very much; which was admired of all that the father should doe this unto his child, and that he was so stout that hee would not crie.'⁸⁴

-
81. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali talks of children from Sayyid families memorizing their distinguished lineage from the time they started to speak intelligibly. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.7.
82. Z.U. Malik, 'Some Aspects of Mughal Culture', p.38.
83. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, pp.186-90.
84. Wiliam Hawkins, in Foster ed., *Early Travels*, pp.117.

The autobiographical experiences of Manucci provides similar incident:

'... it once happened to me that I was treating a child of Sultan Mu'izz al-Din for a small sore he had on his head. One day I said laughingly, to make him forget the pain he felt, that he must not be angry. The eunuchs and the matrons who were present found what I had said to be most extraordinary, and replying to me, they said that Moghul princes were never disturbed in mind, and all they did was void of passion and full of prudence.'⁸⁵

Orme says :

'The children (of native families) are capable of assisting them (parents) in their business at an age when ours scarce begin to learn. It is common to see a boy of eleven years enter into an assembly of considerable men make his obeisance, deliver his message, and then retire with all the propriety and grace of a very well-bred man.'⁸⁶

Girls, on the other hand, were put in seclusion when they were only four to six years old⁸⁷ and socialized into the ways of an ideal woman. Besides the various household skills, this involved the grooming into the role of a dutiful wife and of a 'virtuous' woman, much before they were aware of their sexuality.⁸⁸

Within this context it is scarcely surprising that the autobiography of Mir Taqi Mir has the child Mir inhabit the mystical expositions and experiences of his Sufi father and adopted father, a world too esoteric for a seven years old. It is interesting that his grief on the death of the adopted father is consoled by his own

85. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.324.

86. Orme, *Historical Fragments*, p.431.

87. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.322; Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.379.

88. See Bhatti, 'Socializing of the Female Muslim Child', Leela Dube, 'On the construction of Gender: Hindu Girls in Patrilineal India' in Chanana, ed., *Socialization Education and Women*.

father in a language and sentiment meant for an adult.⁸⁹ This makes comprehensible the quite facile observation of Mrs Meer Hassan Ali that in native families the son is made both the companion and friend of the father.⁹⁰

Thus the entire being of children as individual entities had been effaced. This is manifest in the sources which are evocatively silent over them. Memoirs and autobiographies never talk of their childhood, biographies gloss over their subject as child, and the architectural layout of the *haveli* has no space earmarked for them. They dwell with the adults and dissolve into their world.

Within these moorings the children of the *havelis* grew, which implied a passing over of their adolescence also.

The adult model of medieval society, understandably, feared the delicate stage of youth. A general sentiment runs through the contemporary sources that frowns upon youth as a period of inexperience, impetuosity, and temptation, full of implications to lead astray, spelling only ruination. Bihari, a social conformist, could not have expressed the attitude better:

As thousands are drowned
or swept away
by a river in flood
and others trapped in swamps
or drenched;
so some are soused
with youth's enjoyment
some trapped in its bonds
and for many
it is the speedy way
to perdition.⁹¹

89. Mir Taqi Mir, *Mir Ki Ap Biti*, pp.81-2.

90. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, p.1, p.334.

91. Bihari, *Satsai*, English tr. Krishna P. Bahadur, Delhi, 1990, pp.283-4, Verse. 640.

The identification of youth with waywardness is precisely what makes the Urdu poets of the period celebrate it.⁹²

The patriarchal objectives of the family had made sons necessary and important and, in general, were desired over daughters. Mannucci remarks:

‘If a prince is born..., all the court takes part in the rejoicings, which last several days, as the king may ordain. Instruments are played and music resounds; the nobles appear to offer their congratulations to the king, bringing presents, either in jewels, money, elephants, or horses.’⁹³

Akbar had ordered the celebration of the birth of daughters as well, but Abul Fazl does not fail to observe that this was exceptional.⁹⁴ Mrs Meer Hassan Ali observes that in native families the birth of a son is ‘immediately announced by a discharge of artillery, where canon are kept...’⁹⁵ They ‘fancy there is more honour attached to a house where there are many sons.’⁹⁶ Parks, who feels the gender inequality strongly, comments: ‘Sons are of inestimable value; the birth of a daughter is almost a calamity...’⁹⁷ It is significant that when Shah Nawaz Khan discusses the progeny of a noble, the daughters are conspicuous by near absence. The appearance of a son seems to have legitimized the whole purpose of a *haveli* family’s existence.

The hierarchical organisation of the family in the *havelis*, which had defined lines of authority and submission amongst its members, demanded of children complete obedience to the parents. Obedient children were considered the

92. This formulation is derived from a reading of Harbans Mukhia, ‘The Celebration of Failure as Dissent in Urdu *Ghazal*,’ *Modern Asian Studies* (Forthcoming).

93. Mannucci, *Storia*, 2, p.320.

94. Abul Fazl, *Akbar-Namah*, 3, p.816.

95. Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 2, p.3; also Parks, 1, p.404.

96. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 2, p.3.

97. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.454.

recipient of all blessings; no sorrow could ever touch them.⁹⁸ The concept played itself out in the reverence and respect children had for their parents. De Laet comments: 'The Indians are... extremely devoted to their parents, preferring to die of famine themselves than that their parents should suffer hunger.'⁹⁹ Mrs Meer Hassan Ali reflects admiringly: 'In their reverential homage towards parents, and in affectionate solicitude for the happiness of these venerated authors of their existence, I consider them the most praiseworthy people existing.'¹⁰⁰ Thus Shah Nawaz Khan instructs: '... to fail in respect of one's parents is to cast oneself into the well of baseness.'¹⁰¹

As for the parents, European observers found the love they harboured for their children was incomparable. Writing to Fr. Balthus in 1720, Fr. Bouchet remarks: '... it is most certain that there is no nation in the world where parents are more fond of their children; the tenderness of fathers and mothers in this respect is beyond imagination.'¹⁰² Dubois says: '... I can confidently assure you that the Hindoo parents of all castes... if equalled by any people on the earth in tenderness towards their progeny... are scarcely surpassed by none; nay, it may be said, that their parental affection is rather carried to excess...'¹⁰³ Orme comments: 'The Gentoos are very affectionate parents...'¹⁰⁴ While Forbes considered the distinguishing characteristics of the Hindus to be filial and parental affection.¹⁰⁵

98. Dharmendra Shastri, ed., *Darya Granthavali*, Patna, 2012 V.S., 2, p.148, in Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*. p.54.

99. De Laet, *The Empire of the Great Mogol*, p.83.

100. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.4.

101. Shah Nawaz Khan, *Ma'asir al-Umara*, 2-2, p.759.

102. Lockman, *Travels of the Jesuits*, 3, p.50, in Raghuvanshi, *Indian Society in the Eighteenth Century*, p.89.

103. Dubois, *Letters on the State of Christianity*, p.203.

104. Orme, *Historical Fragments*, p.431.

105. Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, 1, pp.71-2.

Besides regarding them with love, parents guided and instructed their children. All their lives they felt a responsibility towards them and never deserted them, for, they were the meaning of their own earthly existence.

However, fear of disruptive challenges to the family would have discouraged a direct relationship between parents and children for that spelled promotion of an individualistic unit. Their ties of interest and affection had therefore to be subordinated to the larger unit. This explains the silence in the sources on parents and children relating as a unit. As in case of the wife, memoirs, autobiographies, and biographies do not talk about relationship with children and refer to them in the most routinized manner.¹⁰⁶

That the medieval families were characterized by intense feuds shows how greatly different the existential reality of parent-children relationship was from the structural reality. It reveals the strength of the relationship at the institutional level and weakness at the individual level.

In contrast, it is in the grandparents that ties with the children are active. The image of the indulgent grandparents, narrating stories to the grandchildren, is only too well-known, and Maheshwar Dayal nostalgically recalls it in his attempt to recreate the life of a *haveli* in Shahjahanabad.¹⁰⁷ Ahmad Ali devotes special attention to Mir Nihal when the latter reaches grandfatherhood, and Ghalib's indulgent fondness for his grandchildren easily comes through in his letters. It is not insignificant that in the imperial family when a son was born it

106. Reflecting upon the subordination of ties of interest and affection to the larger unit Jacobson, in her study, observes that a man should avoid fondling or carrying his own children in the presence of his elders. Even the mother feels embarrassed in dandling her children too obviously, although both she and her husband felt no shyness in playing with the children of other members of the family. Jacobson, 'Purdah and the Hindu Family', p.98.

107. Dayal, *Alam Mein Intekhab*, pp.31-3.

was the grandfather who fixed the child's name and granted an allowance.¹⁰⁸ The family ideology which underlay grandparents and grandchildren relationship was a fostering of bonds across generation in order to keep alive the concept of family as an extended unit inasmuch as to strengthen it as a house.

Ancestors and Kins

Concept of the family as a 'house' explains the ties which were alive with ancestors within the *havelis*. Autobiographies and biographies always begin by recalling them. Homage was paid to them. On possessing the sovereignty of Hindustan, one of the first acts of Babur was to throw open the gates of his service particularly to those who had served 'our father and grandfather and ancestors.'¹⁰⁹ Children could be named after them.¹¹⁰ Their graves were venerated and ties with ancestral homelands retained. The traditions and customs they bequeathed were upheld, and care was taken to maintain the honour of their name. A general disposition to know one's ancestry prevailed. The deep regard ancestors were held in was noticed by Forbes who mentions that numerous ceremonies were conducted annually in their name.¹¹¹ Infact they were looked upon as heroes. This was because the dead of the family, never to be forgotten, were assimilated into its objective structure which being sacred made them sacred too.

The 'house' of family depended upon the nurture of the units it was composed of. This informed the ties that were established with the kins, even as protecting it as an extended unit. This concern is reflected, importantly, in the responsibility the head of the house felt towards them in times of distress, such as when orphaned. The point can only be made at the expense of idealizing the

108. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.320-1.

109. Gulbadan Begam, *Humayun-Namah*, p.97.

110. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.404.

111. Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, 3, p.102.

relationship. Babur took great care of his seven paternal aunts whose father was dead. They stayed with him at Agra and, quite apart from providing them houses, lands, and gifts 'to their hearts desire', he would visit them every week.¹¹² The sense of responsibility he felt towards them is reflected in his compelling reaction when, on one of the days of the visit, it was extremely hot and blowing and his wife, Maham, proposed him to put it off: 'Maham' exclaimed he 'it is astonishing that you should say such things! The daughters of Abu-Said Sultan Mirza, who have been deprived of fathers and brothers! If I do not cheer them, how will it be done?'¹¹³ Similarly when Gulbadan Begam was orphaned it was her brother, Humayun, who as head of the house, cared for her in a way that she exults: '... His Majesty, in the fullness of his affection, showed this broken one such favour, and spoke with such boundless compassion to the helpless one, that she did not know she was orphaned and headless.'¹¹⁴ At a more modest level one finds that when the father of Khwaja Mir Dard died, the poet brought up his brother, a child only, and educated him.¹¹⁵ When Ghalib was orphaned at the age of four, his father's brother took the responsibility of the poet, his younger brother, and sister.¹¹⁶ The typical *haveli* of Mir Nihal has the owner's brother's widow, and a distant nephew, staying permanently.

However it is from the medieval family feuds that the concept of protecting the house emerges forcefully. Howsoever hostile, they were never allowed to spill over the bounds of the specific interests. The only evidences available are from the imperial family but the testimony is telling, for, the scale of the feuds at that level

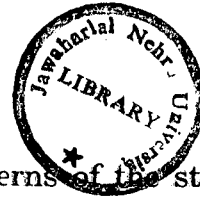
112. Gulbadan Begam, *Humayun-Namah*, p.97.

113. Ibid.

114. Ibid., p.111.

115. Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, London, 1964, p.105.

116. Varma, *Ghalib: The Man, The Times*, p.86.



was classic. In the midst of the overarching concerns of the state which often brought imperial fathers, sons, and brothers into head-on collision, the sanctity of family ties with those uninvolved — demonstrated conspicuously in women and children remaining unharmed — was never violated. All the hostilities between Humayun and his brother, Askari, did not come in way of the Emperor's infant son, Akbar, to be brought up in the latter's household and treated well while the father was in exile at Persia.¹¹⁷ Askari even performed the role of the father in a Timurid custom meant to be auspicious for the child. He threw his turban on the infant Akbar when he learnt to walk so that he may loose balance and fall.¹¹⁸ Once the issue of succession to the throne had been resolved in his favour, Aurangzeb treated his father well while his sister, Jahan-Ara, who played a central role in opposing him, once again became the most respected woman in the realm, with honours added. To his own son, Akbar, the Emperor succeeded, after the initial rancour wore off, in marrying the daughter of his slain brother, Dara Shukoh. Similarly, in the war of succession consequent upon Aurangzeb's death, Bahadur Shah, the victor, adopted the sons of his slain brothers, Azam Khan and Kambaksh, and treated them with such affection that it only excited the jealousies of his own sons.¹¹⁹

TH-6791

Nurture of the units could involve arranging livelihood or marriage for its members, giving them economic or emotional support, or all those miscellaneous forms of help in everyday life.

117. I.H. Qureshi, *Akbar: The Architect of the Mughal Empire*, Delhi, reprint, 1987, p.35.

118. Abul Fazl, *Akbar-Namah*, 1, pp.396-7.

119. Syed Ghulam Husain, *Seir Mutaquerin*, 4 vols., Delhi, 1926, 1, pp.11, 14.

The *Havelis* and Absence of Privacy

The structure of interpersonal relationships within the *havelis* reflects that the individual had been absorbed by the social. A complete absence of the concept of privacy, therefore, marked the medieval abode and appears expressed variedly.

It is found that the organizing principle of space within the *haveli*, was not the modern, four-cornered room, individuated on the bases of functions. Instead, hall-like spaces, put to use for all purposes, defined it and small, dark, four-cornered spaces provided servicing facilities like storage, lumber, etc. The *haveli*, to emphasize, had no concept of a room. Its dwelling space was a complex of structures arranged around a courtyard, the centre-piece of which was a hall, cavernous and pillared, having arched openings; it was called the *dalaan*. In the *dalaan* went on household chores of every sort, women lounged and gossiped, children grew and played, and the family had meals and slept. All social events of the family and festivals were celebrated, and all rites and rituals performed. The functions of the *dalaan* spilled into the courtyard where so much of the *haveli* activities went on. The versatility of the *dalaan's* functions, and the fluidity of its boundaries, expresses the absence of privacy which, in turn, is symbolized by an absence of doors.¹²⁰ These, in the *haveli*, having a protective value, were a feature of only the spaces meant for storage¹²¹ [See Plates I, VI].

Just as space, time in the *havelis*, too, had not been individuated in any measure. The dividing lines between work-time and leisure-time, as in the modern age, had not been drawn, what with the women performing household chores even as they lounged around and gossiped. Meals had no fixed time and, further, were had together from a common bowl (the *dastar khawan* culture), where any concept

120. Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.305.

121. Ibid.

of 'table' service was unknown.¹²² Similarly, sleep could be taken at any time, and did not involve the etiquette of night-dress, darkness, silence, and exclusivity. Instead storytellers, reciting tales by lamps, lulled usually clad masters and mistresses to sleep, amidst domestics and disturbances of the surroundings [See Plate II]. Reflecting upon the native women's wonder of the European women sleeping alone, Parks comments: 'My not being afraid to sleep in the dark without having half a dozen slave girls snoring around me, surprised them.'¹²³ Col. Gardner, describing to her his sojourn amongst native relatives at Lucknow, said: "I slept every night with the thermometer at 100°, and surrounded by 500 females!"¹²⁴ To so express it, reflects the strangeness of sleep's social nature to modern sensibilities.

Social invasion of the most private activities in the *havelis*, this implies, is stylized in an painting where servants are in attendance on the emperor Muhammad Shah himself who is depicted making love to a woman; the painting leaves nothing to imagination.¹²⁵ Sexual activity — and therefore the body — was not private [See Plate III]. A popular theme of Mughal miniature repertoire is the toilet of a lady where naked mistresses are being given bath by their maid-servants [See Plate IV]. Thus the functions of the body also were not private. Ghalib's letters to friends have the ailing poet talk freely of his — and of others — bladder and bowels complications.¹²⁶ Dargah Quli Khan's account of one popular entertainer of

122. Such as spoons, forks, knives. Food in other words was eaten with the aid of fingers. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.311; Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, p.68; De Laet, *The Empire of the Great Mogol*, p.92; Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.433.

123. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.451.

124. *Ibid.*, p.90.

125. J.66-1, Oriental and India Office Collections, London (Former IOLR).

126. Russell and Islam, eds. and trs., *Ghalib: Life and Letters*, pp. 109, 117, 185, 314, 324, 346-7, 353.

Delhi suggests that even the noises of the body were not private.¹²⁷ Absence of privacy of the body, and its functions, was encoded in the architectural layout of the *haveli* where the space for ablutions was located along the courtyard of its main habitable space, putting the usage by the dwellers under social exposure.

Absence of privacy of space and time, functions, personal activities, and body ramified into an absence of privacy of the self. Writing of native women, Mrs Meer Hassan Ali comments: '...they are... extravagantly fond of company... . To be alone is a trial to which they are seldom exposed, every lady having companions amongst her dependents... .'¹²⁸ Further: '...they are miserable without society, the habit of associating with numbers having grown up with infancy to maturity: ' "to be alone" is considered, with women thus situated, a real calamity.'¹²⁹ Parks remaining alone, writing in her room, and not being unhappy when alone, was looked upon by the *zenana* women as a 'very odd creature'. Someone or the other was always coming to talk to her.¹³⁰ The Englishwoman observes that servants in India were not called by bells.¹³¹ In other words, absence of the notion of privacy of one's self (and space or society), had them hovering around in ready attendance, as the Mughal miniature paintings illustrate so wonderfully. Invasion of the self by the social emerges with perfection in Mir's autobiography where, the poet, instead of weaving the story of his life by focussing upon himself, places events and happenings he witnessed at the centre-stage, and himself inhabits their background.

127. Dargah Quli Khan, *Murraqqa-i Dehli*, p.170.

128. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, pp.322-3.

129. *Ibid.*, p.323.

130. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.451.

131. *Ibid.*, p.145.

Therefore an absence of the armour of self-restraint is apparent in the communications between the inhabitants of the medieval abode. The novelty of seeing Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, an Englishwoman, was expressed by the *zenana* women in a physical examination of her dress, complexion, hair, hand... and the look of wonder!¹³² And of the other Englishwoman, Parks, took the form that she could never undress without having half a dozen slave girls peeping at her 'silly' from every corner of the *pardah*.¹³³ Even otherwise, she found herself being peeped at all the time so that she comments: "It was almost impossible to enjoy solitude..."¹³⁴ The absence of self-restraint in the *havelis*, and of all other privacies, mutated the sensibilities of its dwellers; it was their natural response to close in physical space and herd together. Parks writes:

'It is a curious fact, that a native lady in a large house always selects the smallest room for her own apartment. A number of ladies from the palace at Delhi were staying in a distant house, to which a friend having gone to visit them, found all in the bathing room, they having selected as the smallest apartment in which they could crowd themselves.'¹³⁵

Masters and Servants

Servants were a given feature of the households dwelling in the *havelis*. Quite apart from the existential necessity to perform the very many tasks its life created, servants served as an instrument through which the high-born made a statement of their social status and exclusivity. By suggesting the affordability, they represented the economic status, and by signalling a distance from physical

132. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.359.

133. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.387.

134. *Ibid.*, p.451.

135. *Ibid.*, 2, p.216.

work, they expressed the exclusivity of the *havelis*. Thus servants raised the masters up the social scale, and it was a status to have a household overflowing with them.

The structure of master-servant interpersonal relationship within the *havelis* was a category of community life. Concepts of personal intimacy and sharing informed it, regulated however by the overall structure of power concentration/deprivation amongst classes. The character of the relationship between them was, therefore, inclusive-exclusive and not oppositional as in modern society.

The inclusive character of the master-servant relationship expressed itself in varied ways. The architectural layout of the *haveli* had no separate space assigned for the servants. They dwelled with their masters and, thereby, encoded the sentiments of sharing one's own and of personal intimacy. It is noteworthy that the kitchen, which in the *haveli* life was mostly dependent on the servants, was located in the main dwelling space. The sentiments of inclusion underlay the form in which the services of servants were remunerated. Besides cash, they were paid in kind, symbolized in the mandatory offering to them of meals and raiment.¹³⁶ However it is in the unfolding of all the happenings of the masters' lives before the eyes of servants that the inclusive aspect of the relationship really played itself out. The Mughal miniature paintings are a brilliant testimony where servants figure in virtually all portrayals of their masters' lives. The literary novels are another scintillating illustration¹³⁷ and the case of Dilchain, the aged maid, in the *haveli* of

136. General observations on servants here and below have been, more than the conventional sources, derived from literary and social novels. Any additional information has been given.

137. Particularly Mehta's *Inside the Havelis*.

Mir Nihal is merely representative. She is seen included in the entire fortunes of his family — happy or sad, pleasant or unpleasant, big or small. The extent of it is visible in the spirit that overwhelms her on the nuptials of Mir Nihal's son:

'Inside the house old Dilchain was feeling merry. She was quite sixty and her teeth had all gone. She had a pointed chin and long nose, and because her teeth had fallen the chin and the nose came very much together. When they had finished dinner and sat in the room she snatched away Masroor's (Mir Nihal's nephew) Turkish cap from his head, put on somebody's sherwani, and dressed like a man. Then she suddenly began to dance. With her toothless gums she made faces and went round and round, ogling and making eyes like bawds, and ended up every whirl with a lewd but funny gesture, her hands away and her chin and nose meeting almost in a loop. She looked so ludicrous that they all laughed and laughed until their sides began to ache. But she went on, as if she were intoxicated or had gone mad. Then she too began to laugh and tears came into her small, half-closed myopic eyes.'

Could this involvement of Dilchain been possible without her very close inclusion in the everyday events of Mir Nihal's family? Similarly, the illness of Mir Nihal's adult son, Habibuddin, so affects her sensibilities that she tries to make sense of it in her own ignorant ways. When Begam Waheed, the married daughter of Mir Nihal, visits her maternal home after long, Dilchain, like everyone else of the *haveli* is seen bubbling with joy and excitement. The frequent quarrels and flare-ups of the cantankerous Begam Jamal, widow of Mir Nihal's brother, and the shouting at of children by the elders of the household do not exclude her. She is found everywhere. The women's gossiping coterie has her sit close by, putting her penny bit; the duststorm has her huddled with the rest of the family, bewildering the children with tales on the furious storm; the marriage of Asghar has her giving *neg* as one of the family, and throwing water on the horse's feet when his bride is received in her conjugal home. So completely is Dilchain assimilated in the affairs of Mir Nihal's family that her grumblings and mumblings only betray the intimacy she is held in.

As a side-show the novel of Ahmad Ali reveals the inclusion of Gafoor, the retainer of Mir Nihal himself, and Chanbeli, the maid in his daughter-in-law, Bilqueece, natal home. The joy of Begam Waheed's visit is expressed by Gafoor by putting a little more *attar* (perfume) on his clothes and beard, and besmearing his parrot too. On the marriage of Asghar he is found to feel 'very important' and even go berserk in the enjoyments. Chanbeli, on the other hand, weeps when Bilqueece departs her home. Weeping by the mother and sisters of a departing daughter of the family after marriage is a common feature of Indian households; Chanbeli clearly identifies herself as a member of the weeping family. The participation of Dilchain, Gafoor, and Chanbeli in the marriage of Asghar and Bilqueece is symbolic of servants' general involvement in the event. Qatil says that on this day the happiness of the servants in the household was no less than that of any of its members. They dressed up in their best outfits for the occasion.¹³⁸

Inclusion of servants in the happenings of their masters lives could manifest itself in an absorption within the folds of *haveli* family — the reference point of personal intimacy with its dwellers. This is ably demonstrated in the institution of the nurse. The very nature of her duties had placed the nurse a step ahead of other servants in terms of inclusion and this is seen resolved in that she was formally considered a part of the family. Thus she was the foster-mother (*anaga*) of the Mughal princes, while her husband the foster-father (*atqa*), and the son foster-brother (*koka*). Her family members could be appointed at the highest echelons of the state¹³⁹, and through marriage she could be formally absorbed in

138. Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, p.145.

139. The well-known examples are Adham Khan, Mirza Aziz Koka, and Zain Khan Koka. They were the sons of Akbar's wet-nurses.

the family itself.¹⁴⁰ Mrs Meer Hassan Ali remarks, perhaps somewhat exaggeratedly : '(the nurse) is, indeed, only second in the estimation of the parents to the child she has reared and nourished; and with the child, she is of more consequence than even his natural parents.'¹⁴¹ Commenting on the institution of wet-nurse, she writes: '... a wet-nurse once engaged in a family becomes a member of that house to the end of her days, unless she chooses to quit it herself.'¹⁴² Such was the assimilation that her children were received into the family of her employer either as servants or companions and their interest in life was regarded and watched over with the 'solicitude of relations' by the parents of the child she had nursed.¹⁴³

Then, maid-servants could become concubines or legitimate wives of the masters¹⁴⁴, and there are instances of children born from them becoming heirs.¹⁴⁵ That sexual relationship with servants, unlike the modern society, was not frowned upon¹⁴⁶ only highlights the inclusive character of the master-servant relationship. Drawing upon terms that defined family relationship to address them, more so when they were old and deeply associated within it, was quite usual

140. Some of Humayun's concubines (concubinage was a form of marriage in medieval Indian society) were Akbar's wet-nurses. K.S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, Delhi, 1988, p.30.

141. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 2, p.11.

142. *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

143. *Ibid.*, p.12.

144. Salim Kidwai, 'Sultans, Eunuchs and Domestics' in Utsa Patnaik and Manjari Dingwanery ed., *Chains of Servitude: Bondage and Slavery in India*, Delhi, 1985, see pp.79, 90, 92; Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, p.29. Examples of former slaves becoming wives: Sher Shah's father's one co-wife, Humayun's wife, Mewajan, and Aurangzeb's wife, Udaipuri Mahal.

145. For example Kam Baksh, the son of Udaipuri Mahal, was one of the contenders for Aurangzeb's throne and fought the war over it on the latter's death.

146. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, see pp.31-2.

and suggests a potential to assume the formal aspect too. It is interesting that when one Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq wishes the hand of Gafoor for marriage to his niece, it is with Mir Nihal — the master — that he broaches the subject. In the carnival spirit which seized marriage celebrations, the maid-servants, considering the son-in-law of their masters as their own, hurled obscenities at him like the mistresses of the household did.¹⁴⁷

As one of the family a sense of care and responsibility could be felt towards them. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali praises the 'undeviating kindness to aged servants, no longer capable of rendering their accustomed services' amongst the native families.¹⁴⁸ Qatil mentions the instance of a servant whom he met who said that in his old age it was his master who supported him and took such great care that, while giving him good food everyday, took no work from him.¹⁴⁹ Ghalib's woes talk of his obligation to 'feed his servants', the poet's destitution notwithstanding.¹⁵⁰ Despite allusion to a sexual liaison between Mir Nihal and Dilchain, the aged maid appears assimilated in her master's family; a long serving servant could not be easily disgraced.

According to Orme: 'The Gentoos... treat their domestics with great mildness',¹⁵¹ and according to Forbes: 'The Mohammedans in general treat their slaves with humanity and by kind attention render their servitude easy and comfortable.'¹⁵² Ornaments and riches could be heaped upon favourite servants. Their inclusion in the lives of the masters evidently had no boundaries. Thus they

147. Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, p.145.

148. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.3.

149. Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, p.181.

150. Russell and Islam, trs. and eds., *Ghalib: Life and Letters*, pp.171, 221.

151. Orme, *Historical Fragments*, p.431.

152. Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, 3, p.167.

could be found as their masters confidential friends¹⁵³, soul-mates, even providing them comfort, as the miniatures illustrate so movingly [See Plates V, VI, VII]. The inclusiveness made the relationship appear so harmonious that Mrs Meer Hassan was led to comment:

‘Here I find the master and mistress of a family receive the utmost veneration from their slaves and domestics, whilst the latter are permitted to converse and give their opinions with a freedom (always respectful), that at first view would lead a stranger to imagine there could be no great inequality of station between the persons conversing.’¹⁵⁴

Inclusion of servants was, however, regulated in ways that exhibited — and reinforced — their existence at the margins of society and, therefore, exclusion from the lives of the masters. For example, if servants dwelled with their masters, their position was encoded in that a separate space for them informally assumed shape. For instance, the four-cornered spaces meant for storage could be negotiated for their use.¹⁵⁵ The *havelis*, where instead of one *dalaan* there were two (*dar dalaan* i.e. *dalaan* within a *dalaan*), the outer *dalaan*, otherwise meant to provide greater space and protection against nature’s elements, came to be used by them.¹⁵⁶ Were the *haveli* to have just the usual single *dalaan*, then the courtyard was taken over by them.¹⁵⁷ Depending upon where the masters were, the servants space carved itself out. Its fixity lay in that it was always at their margins. Inasmuch as the presence of kitchen in the main dwelling space expressed inclusion of servants, its location opposite the women’s *dalaan*, enabling supervision over their wastages and pilferages, expressing a distrust of them, manifested their exclusion from the masters’ lives. Though meals were shared,

153. Ibid.

154. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.3.

155. As in Mehta’s *Inside the Havelis*.

156. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.306.

157. As Dilchain does in the *haveli* of Mir Nihal.

servants had them after the masters had eaten, and at some distance away, say 'in any retired corner of the courtyard', avoiding the presence of their superiors as much as possible.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, though the servants slept in the space of the masters, it was always at their margins. If the master slept on the bed then the servant took position on the floor.¹⁵⁹ The position of servants was expressed in an adherence to a detailed hierarchy while communicating with their masters, as the miniature paintings illustrate [See Plates V, VIII].

The exclusion of servants suggested that they were not viewed as persons by the masters. If all events of the family life unfolded before them, if its every affair could be talked in their presence, if quarrels could go on before them, and children shouted at, it displayed, on the obverse side, that their sensitivities were unimportant. That the miniature paintings have servants in the love scenes, even the most intimate, reinforces it [See Plate IX]. No shame was experienced before them, and nothing was private from them, as the paintings on the ladies' toilet illustrate. In other words servants were more like objects in the background of their masters' lives. When the masters had servants dwelling in their space, implicit in it was an insensitivity towards them. Torn from their families, it denied them a social and emotional life amongst their own people, and deprived them of a space where they could be themselves. This had the ramification of appropriating their time which came to be distributed around the axis of their master's concerns. Finally, the economic exploitation, the well-known acts of maltreatment/cruelty of servants, the corporeal punishment, underscored their powerlessness in the structure of class relationship.

158. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.327.

159. As demonstrated in Mehta's novel.

Life in the *Havelis*: Contesting the Givens

It is easy to perceive the normative structure of patriarchy as resting upon the subjugation of women as a category, and the internalisation of its norms by them. The existential gender relations were, however, marked by far greater dynamism, complexity, and fluidity. Indeed, the structure itself was not predicated upon the concentration/deprivation of power dichotomy between the men and the women; instead it seems to have distributed power unequally along the public/domestic divide. If men commanded power in the public sphere, the management and the resources of the home were left to the women. Understandably then, a degree of symbiosis as well as a considerable measure of tension inhered in gender relations emanating from this asymmetrical structure and its even more asymmetrical working. The measure of symbiosis gave order to the family, the habitat, and society at large; tension expressed itself at the level of genders as a category; even more, it expressed itself in the attempt at patriarchal control over the energies of women and their self-assertion as conscious human individuals. The will of women manifested, interpreted, and manipulated the structure in order to create power and enlarge space for itself within and in contestation with that frame. Interpersonal relationships within the *havelis* were, therefore, also a question of the subversive role of individuals in conflict with the circumscriptions of the normative structure.

Women empowered themselves in a myriad ways, generating resources from the very structure defined for them. The social division of roles between genders — reinforced by seclusion — organising the patriarchal order had significant ramifications. By excluding men from the domestic or feminine realm a space was provided to women over which they had an autonomy. This autonomy became a resource to redefine their secondary roles in ways which brought them

centre-stage to the social being of the *havelis*. It were they who facilitated the passage of its dwellers through life's most significant stages — birth, marriage, and death — and consecrated them through the countless rites and rituals. *Rasum-i Dehli*, a nineteenth century compilation on the rites and rituals of Delhi, illustrates how childbirth — in the context of seclusion — was an affair managed solely by women.¹ Marriage, the most important social event in the life of the *haveli*-dwellers, was in their control.² It were the women's networks which were largely responsible for arranging its contracts, though the formal negotiation of the contracts was the prerogative of men.³ Rich evidence is available which shows that women were central to its celebration.⁴ When Shahjahan's sons, Dara Shukoh and Shah Shuja, were to marry it was his daughter, Jahan-Ara, the principal lady of the *seraglio*, who was formally charged with the superintendence of all the arrangements.⁵ The centrality of women to the occasion of marriage is reflected in the pressures on the *haveli*'s lady on the occasion. Says Parks:

"The Begam was in perfect agony from morning till night, lest anyone thing should be forgotten, — lest any, even the smallest gift be omitted; if it were, the people would say, "What a shabby wedding!" and, inspite of all the expense, she would lose her good name."⁶

-
1. Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi, *Rasum-i Dehli*, Delhi, 1986, pp.63-7.
 2. Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, p.141; William Buyers, *Recollections of Northern India with Observations of the Origin, Customs, and Moral Sentiments of the Hindoos*, London, 1848, p.398; Raghuvanshi, *Indian Society in the Eighteenth Century*, p.105; Ahmad Ali also explicitly states it.
 3. Minault, 'Other Voices, Other Rooms', p.108; a complete discussion of this is available in Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, pp.351-4.
 4. Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, pp.139, 141-2, 144-5, 149; Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, 423-48; Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, pp.372-89; Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi, *Rasum-i Dehli*, pp.99-105.
 5. Inayat Khan, *Shahjahan-Namah*, p.90.
 6. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.423.

Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali dwells :

“The guests make their own amusements for the day; the mother is too much occupied with her daughter’s affairs to give much of her time or attention to them; nor do their expect it, for they all know by experience the nature of a mother’s duty at such an interesting period.”⁷

The autonomy — and power — of women in context of marriage is also reflected in their centrality to the entertainments and merry-making, to the songs and dances, which were an accompaniment to it.⁸ It is displayed in their privilege to banter, to tease, even to throw obscenities at the bride-takers in the amusements socially approved for the bride-givers to subvert the asymmetrical structure of relationship between them.⁹ Their pivotal position is manifested in the testimony they accorded to its consummation without which it was not considered socially legitimate.¹⁰

The status occupied by women in the rites and rituals of the *haveli*’s life’s stages is represented, poignantly, in the ritual of mourning which having a social face required a public demonstration of grief, should death occur in them. They took it over in rhythmic beating of breasts, lamentations, and set utterances. Manucci writes that upon death:

‘the female relations and female friends stand in a circle, and with their stomachs bared beat themselves severely with their two hands, weeping for the dead; and, moving round, they sing a song learnt for the purpose.’¹¹

-
7. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.384.
 8. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, 423-48; Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, pp.372-89; Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi, *Rasum-i Dehli*, pp.99-105.
 9. Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, p.145.
 10. Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, pp.151-2. Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi, *Rasum-i Dehli*, p.155; Pelsaert, *Jahangir’s India*, p.84; Dayal, *Alam Mein Intekhab*, pp.30-1.
 11. Manucci, *Storia*, 3, p.68.

Bernier, visiting the house of a dead friend to persuade his widow against performing *sati*, found:

‘a regular witches’ *Sabat* of seven or eight old hags, and another of four or five excited, wild, and aged *Brahmens* standing round the body, all of whom gave by turns a horrid yell, and beat their hands with violence. The widow was seated at the feet of her dead husband; her hair was dishevelled and her visage pale, but her eyes were tearless and sparkling with animation while she cried and screamed aloud like the rest of the company, and beat time with her hands to this horrible concert. The hurly-burly having subsided, I approached the hellish group....’¹²

When Mir Nihal’s adult son, Habibuddin, died ‘the whole house was filled with sounds of lamentation’ of women who ‘all embraced and cried and beat their breasts.’ In the funeral rites of Muslims, Forbes observes, widows and matrons were hired to ‘weep and wail, and beat upon their breast with loud lamentations.’¹³

Parks picturesque details of an encounter of Hindu women grieving by the *ghats* of the Ganges offers a coherent and complete image of women taking charge of the ritual of grief:

‘After having burnt the corpse... by the side of the Ganges, they (about 50 women), came in procession (two by two, down to the ghat), to lament, bathe, and put on clean garments; one woman walked in front, reciting a monotonous chant, in which the others every now and then joined in chorus, beating their breasts and foreheads in time to the monotonous singing.

They assembled on the steps of the ghat. Each woman wore a white chudda (in shape like a sheet), which was wrapped so closely around her that it covered her body and head entirely, the eyes alone being visible. Standing on the steps of the ghat, they renewed their lament; beating their breasts, foreheads, and limbs, and chanting

12. Bernier, *Travels*, pp.307-8.

13. Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, 3, p.327.

their lament all the time; then they all sat down, and beat their knees with their hands in time to the dirge; afterwards, they descended into the river to bathe and change their clothes...¹⁴

Mourning rites' utterances were defined by the relationship the women had with the dead.¹⁵ When condolence was offered, it was the principal lady of the household who became the focal recipient. It was expressed in a form called *Munh Dhakna* (literally covering the face) which has been described by Maulavi Sayyid Dehlavi in the following words:

'When some woman arrives to condole death, she holds the head of the grieving lady and sits down. She, then, covers her face (whence *Munh Dhakna*), expresses the qualities of the dead, bemoans her own misery and shock over the death, and laments her grief in loud wails. The grieving lady joins in the grief and the two lament for sometime, after which the condolence-offering woman simulates kneading the forehead of the condolence-taking woman as if to avoid ache. She then offers some words of consolation and enquires details about the death.'¹⁶

It would be observed that, in the passage of the *haveli* dwellers through life's stages, men receded largely into the background. The centre-stage position of women in the rites and rituals reflects that they inhabited the socio-religious space of the *havelis*. Their participation in its celebrations, festivals, feasts and festivities only reinforces it. Dubois writes:

'... it is very well known that it is they (women of India) who are the leaders, and act the principal part in the most solemn family ceremonies, such as those of wedding, of the cord, and c.& c., while the males remain, as it were, passive spectators in those crowded assemblies. It is also well-known, that it is day who are the leaders in all the numerous religious feasts, celebrated by the Hindoos, in their houses, during the course of the year...'¹⁷

14. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, pp.166-7.

15. Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi, *Rasum-i Dehli*, pp.168-9.

16. *Ibid.*, p.168.

17. Dubois, *Letters on the State of Christianity*, pp.195-6.

The role of women in the social and religious events of the *havelis*, as delineated above, meant a power over its members: power derived from the control they exercised over their marriage decisions, from childbirth by bringing their infants into the world, and from the sacred by consecrating their life.

The autonomy which they had over the home front enabled women to redefine their role of child-rearing significantly. It may be indicated that, in the love of parents for children amongst the native families, Dubois has emphasized that of the mother for them¹⁸, while Sleeman highlights children's reciprocity in the 'habitual reverence' of the son for the mother.¹⁹ It is not hard to imagine that the exclusivity of their role, placing women in close contact with the children, and the self-sacrifice it involved, fostered the evolution of a particularly intimate relationship between the two. This is underscored in the extent to which they shaped the personality of the sons. Finding the Mughal emperors greatly ignorant of their political duties when ascending the throne, Bernier attributed it to an upbringing in the *zenana*:

'They appear on the stage of life, as if they came from another world, or emerged, for the first time, from a subterraneous cavern, astonished, like simpletons, at all around them.'²⁰

Similarly, Parks found them indecisive and effeminate, and this she considered was a natural consequence of being brought up in the *zenana*.²¹ According to Sleeman, the 'enervating' and 'stultifying' influence of the *zenana* made them incompetent to deal with their duties in the public domain.²² That investigations

18. Ibid., p.203.

19. W.H. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*, ed. V.A. Smith, 2 vols., London, 1893, 1, p.309.

20. Bernier, *Travels*, pp.144-5.

21. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 2, p.216.

22. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, 1, p.310.

into the women's apartments were mandatory when a marriage was negotiated²³ reveals, that, women were at the core of the evolution of children's personality. The critical role they played in their upbringing was recognized and emphasized by the reformist literature of nineteenth century.²⁴ Even as this shows that women were central to the social and emotional lives of children in the *havelis*, it suggests a power they derived from the bond. Thus Parks comments:

'As a means of power over their husbands, native women value their children very much, and are miserable if they had none.'²⁵

Thus children were a major resource with the women for creating space for themselves. This was quite apart from the power of motherhood which the structure had bestowed upon them.²⁶ It must be emphasized, that, power over the husband in a patriarchal household was the resource with women to create space for themselves. The dividends accruing to them from the role of rearing children would have enhanced over time when sons had begun to replace the parents in terms of responsibilities to the household. It is not without significance that even as sons defied, revolted, or even imprisoned their father — as Aurangzeb did —, the mother was always treated by them with respect, even reverence.

Then women's role of a home manager had a similar consequence. The *raison d'être* of the social existence of the inhabitants of the *haveli* being the family, home was the centre of intimacy of their lives. Its management placed women at

23. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, see pp.351, 353-4.

24. See above Ch.2, n. 55.

25. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.391; The power of mother over children has been emphasized by Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, 1, pp.309-11.

26. M.A. Ansari, *Social Life of the Mughal Emperors*, Delhi, 1974, pp.76-7; Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, pp.57, 64; Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, pp.22-4.

the core of their emotional lives and gave them the power of it. It may be mentioned that the *zenana* is movingly referred to as the *ghar* (home) in the contemporary sources.

The social division of roles became a source of women's power in another way which only re-emphasizes the autonomy they held over the domestic realm. Implicating an interdependence of the domestic and public realms, the strict and rigid character of the division made men totally dependent on women for comfort and sustenance, for bearing and raising the children. In this dependency lay enormous power for women to create space. Highlighting its manipulative aspect is Dubois who observes that in private (as opposed to the public domain of men) women found 'means to bring men under subjection, and rule over them, in several instances, with a despotic sway.' Here they assumed all the 'empire' and exercised it over the men.²⁷

The power women derived from the homefront is represented more variedly. The roles it entailed may have been secondary but their management involved much competence. Women are mentioned to have handled childbirth with aplomb²⁸ — a task full of grave risks when professional medical help was unavailable and conditions of seclusion did not permit its execution by male physicians. In procuring wives for their sons, and husbands for their daughters, they evinced an 'attention' and 'foresight' which 'are certainly not surpassed in any country.'²⁹ The household chores were staggering and were the practicality of life. Servants, at times running into a battalion, had to be supervised — and an eagle's eye kept over their wastages and pilferages. Obligations towards relations in the

27. Dubois, *Letters on the State of Christianity*, pp.183-4.

28. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 2, p.6.

29. Dubois, *Letters on the State of Christianity*, p.183.

highly calibrated super-subordinate structure of family relationships had to be fulfilled. Guests — quite usual in the *haveli* life — had to be treated with due honour.

Peace and order had to be maintained amongst a host of family members, which in households having adult sons, with wives and children, all living under one roof could be a challenging feat. Here the authority — and power — of the elder women manifested, amongst whom, a great many discharged it with a 'prudence and discretion' which 'scarcely have a parallel in Europe.'³⁰ It were the elder women's responsibility to train the younger ones into household duties. They kept vigilance over their chastity, and safeguarded the social honour of the *havelis*. Thus women were at the centre of the household and, since, the social and emotional aspects which it represented provided the supportive base to the *havelis* existence in the public domain, they must have been crucial to the fortunes of the medieval abode. The patriarchal discourse, of course, constructed them as the pivot. Dubois opines:

'The influence of the Hindoo females on the welfare of families is so well known, that the success or misfortunes of the Hindoos are almost entirely attributed to their good or bad management. When a person prospers in the world, it is customary to say that he has the happiness to possess an intelligent wife, to whom he is indebted for his welfare; and when any one runs to ruin, it is the custom to say that he has for his partner a bad wife, to whom his misfortunes must chiefly be attributed. In short, a good-natured and intelligent wife is considered, by all castes of natives, as the most valuable of all the blessings which could be bestowed on a family, and a bad one as the most dreaded of all curses; so great is their influence on the fate of the Hindu households.'³¹

30. Ibid., p.185.

31. Ibid., p.184.

The observation of the missionary is merely an elaboration of Jahangir's consideration, two centuries earlier, that the wife was one of the four things on which a man's fate depended.³²

The *zenana* offered a domain where the inmates were not subjected to the controls/scrutiny of men's opinion/judgement; women obtained a space where they could express themselves in ways which reinforced the exclusion of men from it even as it reasserted the autonomy of their realm. This is evident in the sub-culture which evolved within the walls of the *zenana*. There were the popular beliefs and practices which the inmates had imbibed from the surrounding sea of popular culture. There were the homespun cures and remedies they had devised for the illnesses. The liberty seems boundless, exhibited in the abrasions which broke out every now and then amongst them where curses, imprecations, and abuses were bandied about as if nothing. In circumstances of seclusion it became women's great social time to herd together in 'gossiping coteries' and talk and talk, of people and their affairs, of marriages, of this and that, of scandals — down to the pettiest happening in the neighbourhood. They were, infact, repositories of a kind of public opinion on families and their social reputations. Not least, they gossiped about men who, interestingly, became objects in their assemblies.

Dependency — particularly economic — on men, notwithstanding, women thus inhabited a realm in which they were self-sufficient and supreme. From its 'relationships, exchanges, and subjects' men had been excluded. To the concerns central to it viz. domesticity, children, marriages, visits, illnesses, they were peripheral. In the *Begmati Zaban* — the voice of a separate world — is symbolized the self-sufficiency, autonomy, and sub-culture of their realm.

32. Jahangir, *Tuzuk*, 1, p.235.

It is evident that the patriarchal structure could not function through univocal distribution of power. The power it provided to women, even though unequal, appears to have become a base to erode male power in the private and public domains of the family. This can, at the minimum, be concluded from statements in foreign accounts which speak of the immense power women enjoyed, notwithstanding their subjugated status. Commenting on their intervention in critical family affairs is Buyers: '... in almost every transaction, respecting family property, the women have great influence...'³³ Infact, '... very few bargains can be made about it, without their consent.'³⁴ Such power has been emphasized in the elder women of the *havelis*. Says the perceptive missionary:

'As far as the elderly women, in general, are concerned, it may be safely stated that scarcely any important step, affecting the family interests, can be taken, either by their sons, or husbands, without their consent.'³⁵

At another place he interestingly writes:

'(The elderly women) I am convinced, have as much, if not even greater influence, and certainly much more despotic power in their families, than the same class of women in European society. In fact, nearly all the power, of which the family system in India deprives the younger women, is transferred, not, as is sometimes supposed, to the men, whether fathers, brothers, or husbands, but to the elder female members of their families, on either side.'³⁶

Of the elder women the sources highlight the power of the mother, and the only too well-known power of the mother-in-law³⁷ before whom the figure of the father-in-law simply fades away. The power enjoyed by the elder women

33. Buyers, *Recollections of Northern India*, p.398.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., pp.398-9.

36. Ibid., p.400.

37. Dubois, *Letters on the State of Christianity*, p.185; Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, 1, pp.309-11; Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, pp.22, 24.

demonstrates that women's power in the *havelis* increased over time even as the social structure progressively gave them the power of seniority. Thus as the woman declined in sexuality she grew in stature.

The dividing lines between the public and the domestic realms rather thin; women's power in the private space manifested itself in the public space of men.

Buyers perceives:

'... very seldom can a man complete any engagement, or important business transaction, unless he is a very common business man, without first having settled the affair with his privy council, in the female apartments of his house...'³⁸

Further:

'... it is no unusual thing to find a man (in India), who so far from being ashamed of the idea of being under petticoat government, that he will plainly say that he cannot come to a decision on some particular business, till he has obtained the opinion of his mothers and sisters, or of his wife, if not of all of them combined... in almost all family affairs, whether secular or religious, their influence is very great if not almost supreme.'³⁹

At the imperial level they are seen to tender advice and council, to issue edicts and *farmans*, to participate in court deliberations.⁴⁰ The courts' much important business was, according to Manucci, transacted through them, and he remarks: 'For my part, I have done a great deal thus...'⁴¹ He refers to them as 'protectors at court.'⁴² They manipulated appointments, *mansabs* (ranks), jagirs, and honours for their clients.⁴³ Shedding light upon these roles is Bernier who says that the governor of a province to stay in favour of the emperor must find means of making

38. Buyers, *Recollections of Northern India*, p.399.

39. Ibid.

40. Mishra, *Women in Mughal India*, Chs. 2 and 3; Findly, *Nur Jahan*, pp.121-3.

41. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.374.

42. Ibid., 1, p.212.

43. Mishra, *Women in Mughal India*, Chs. 2 and 3.

valuable presents every year, amongst others, to a lady of the *seraglio*.⁴⁴ Very effective as mediators and power-brokers⁴⁵, women could have the potential to determine succession to the throne. Bernier believes:

‘In the *Indies*, as well as in *Constantinople* and other places, the most momentous events are too often caused by the influence of the sex, although the people may be ignorant of the fact...’⁴⁶

Buyers represents:

‘From the most ancient times to the present day, the ladies of India have always had much influence in public and political affairs... (T)hough they are seldom seen in public, their influence is everywhere felt and acknowledged.’⁴⁷

The power of the mother over the son, ‘too apt to occasion a domineering spirit’, manifesting in the public space of men, Sleeman opines:

‘A prince, when he attains the age of manhood, and ought to take upon himself the duties of the government, is often obliged to witness a great deal of oppression and misrule, from his inability to persuade his widowed mother to resign the power willingly into his hands. He often tamely submits to see his country ruined, and his family dishonoured... before he can bring himself, by some act of desperate resolution, to wrest it from her grasp.’⁴⁸

Thus avers Parks that women in India have more influence over men than in any other country⁴⁹, and asserts Buyers:

‘... a (native) woman of ordinary natural endowments (has), a greater influence on her own house and family, than is usually possessed by a European woman...’⁵⁰

44. Bernier, *Travels*, pp.230-1.

45. Mishra, *Women in Mughal India*, Chs. 2 and 3.

46. Bernier, *Travels*, p.16.

47. Buyers, *Recollections of Northern India*, p.397.

48. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, 1, p.309.

49. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.140.

50. Buyers, *Recollections of Northern India*, p.400.

To the European observers they were the real power behind the scene. It appears that the resources created by a strict and rigid division of roles gave them such kind of power that it was manipulated to make themselves more powerful than even their, relatively freer, counterparts in Europe. The extent to which they eroded male power varied, depending upon each woman as an individual in relationship with other kinds of resources generated from the structure.

The medieval patriarchal order by controlling women's sexuality had also placed a high premium on it. A power was created for them which could be mobilised by individual women to crucially expand space. Its potential emerges forcefully in the poetry of Bihari where it has been stylized in context of a polygamous household — a vibrant theatre of power dynamics with many competing interests. The appearance of the new wife is shown, by the poet, to throw the co-wives into tremendous insecurities. The fear would, obviously, have been her power — young and desirable that she was — to create space with the husband through her sexuality and erode that of the older co-wives. It may be reiterated that in a patriarchal household, space with the husband was the resource with a woman to develop power for herself. Thus the coming of a new wife is seen to have generated so much of negative emotions amongst the co-wives:

What her friend said to her
 Your breasts turn heavy
 as your girlhood slips away,
 but it seems they're burdening
 the hearts of your jealous co-wives
 so that their grieved breath
 comes in short gasps!⁵¹

What one of the companions of the newly-wed wife
said to another
 The more her youthful splendour
 blossoms out

51. Bihari, *Satsai*, p.146, Verse: 272.

taking on a new lustre
 the paler turn
 her jealous co-wives !⁵²

What her companion said to her
 Your hard budding breasts
 pushing against your lover's bosom
 have already made him forget
 all your co-wives
 What havoc
 they'll play with them
 when they fully blossom !⁵³

The extreme insecurity amongst the co-wives from the new wife's sexuality reveals the power of sex to erode, or conversely create, space for the woman at one go. The threat could be coped with only by an instrument as powerful and who knew better than women themselves that there was none more powerful than female sexuality:

What one of her companions said to another
 Seeing the newly-wed wife
 from whom childhood had slipped away
 blossoming into a lovely girl,
 her co-wives knew
 she would get
 all their husband's attention.
 That made them warm up to him
 as though he was going
 on a long voyage !⁵⁴

What her companions told her
 Your co-wives
 deliberately appear before you
 sleepy-eyed and tired,
 but I'm telling you, dear friend,
 it's all make-believe
 to put you off.
 It's only so that you may

52. Ibid., p.225, Verse: 475.

53. Ibid., p.254, Verse: 557.

54. Ibid., p.140, Verse: 256.

keep on taking airs
and at length
estrangle him from yourself.⁵⁵

What one of her companions said to another

When she learnt
he had made love
to another woman
giving a miss
to her co-wife,
she was, in the same breath,
glad and downcast,
angry and amused
pleased and vexed !⁵⁶

The new wife on her part is shown to blatantly demonstrate her sexual intimacy with the husband, clearly employing it as a power over the co-wives:

What one of her companions said to another

On the *tija* day
her co-wives gaily adorned themselves
with ornaments
and gorgeous dresses,
but when they saw her sari
rumpled and soiled
with nightlong love-making
they burned with jealousy
and their faces were crest-fallen !⁵⁷

What her companion said to him

Remember, dear lad,
the garland
you took off your bosom
and gave her
in the presence of her co-wives ?
Even though its flowers
have faded,

55. Ibid., p.158, Verse: 302.

56. Ibid., pp.135-6, Verse: 245.

57. Ibid., p.141, Verse: 258.

she goes about
happily supporting it
to taunt them!⁵⁸

The polygamous household was indeed a hot bed of sexual politics! This is underscored in the following commentary of Pelsaert:

'Each night (the husband) visits a particular wife, or *mahal*, and receives a very warm welcome from her and from the slaves, who, dressed specially for the occasion, seem to fly, rather than run, about their duties. If it is the hot weather, they undress the husband as soon as he comes in, and rub his body with pounded sandalwood and rosewater, or some other scented and cooling oil.... Some of the slaves chafe the master's hands and feet, some sit and sing, or play music and dance, or provide other recreation, the wife sitting near him all the time... The husband sits like a golden cock amongst the gilded hens until midnight, or until passion, or drink, sends him to bed. Then if one of the pretty slave girls takes his fancy, he calls her to him and enjoys her, his wife not daring to show any signs of displeasure, but dissembling, though she will take it out on the slave-girl later on.'⁵⁹

The adjustments which the wife is making, clearly, underscores the power of sex to create space for her by leaps and bounds. Parks' terse comment: 'Beauty... was and is sufficient to give the possessor a chance of gaining the rank of Begam'⁶⁰ has the suggestion of sexual appeal as a power for self-assertion with an individual woman. That the beauty of Nur Jahan was popularly perceived to have been the cause of the enormous power she wielded over Jahangir reflects a recognition by medieval society of the power of women's sexuality over men. Contemporary literature of all types have referred to the favourite — whose legitimacy was her sexuality and who was anybody but the chief wife — and her power, leaving the impression of her ubiquitous presence in a polygamous household. To create this

58. Ibid., p.133, Verse: 237.

59. Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, p.65.

60. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.405.

space she had not only to subvert the structure of hierarchy regulating relationships amongst the co-wives, but also to erode the space (and power) they had created over time for themselves as individuals — a challenge she sought to meet with the only resource of sexual power. The favourite, potentially, possessed explosive power and appears to have been restrained from formally occupying the centre-stage by those very principles regulating family life she sought to subvert. However, in the eighteenth century favourites like Lal Kunwar and Udham Bai come across strutting about all powerful on the imperial stage, both private and public. Could the decline of the Mughal polity have caused its family order to also dysfunction? Then, sex was a powerful instrument available to a wife to combat the power of the mother-in-law in the traditional struggle over the affection of the husband/son.

By confining their physical and social space, patriarchy ended up creating a world of women possessing dynamics which became resources to expand their space. Limitations on their mobility had the psychological ramification of concentrating all the energies of women on the homefront. But the chores at home being humdrum and monotonous, with scarcely any potential to grow, restricted the 'expansion' of their minds even as leaving much of their creative energies unsublimated. The energies, being surplus, possessed a characteristic intensity and had the consequence of breeding a world that has been represented by patriarchy as immensely petty, bringing to fore characteristics that have come to be identified as typical of women. However, in confrontation with male power, this very 'pettiness' became women's power. For instance their tireless capacity to 'nag' or 'persist' in all kinds of 'small' ways. When Prince Khusrau, in 1606, revolted

against his father, Jahangir, staking claim to the throne and may have been sentenced to death, the way in which the imperial women supporting him sought to save his life has been dwelled upon by Roe:

(Jahangir's) sister and diuers weomen in the *Seraglia mourne*, refuse their meate, crye out of the kinges dotage and Crueltye, and professe that if hee dye ther will 100 of his kindred burne for him in memorye of the kinges bloudiness to his woorthyest sonne⁶¹

In face of these capacities the best of men would be beaten. While talking of superstitious practices, Qatil observes that should an enlightened man interfere in them and calamity consequently befall, the women of his household could make his life so miserable with unending taunts and criticisms that in the end the man just gave in.⁶² Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali narrates an anecdote, similarly inspired, involving an enlightened *mullah* and his wife in a nearby village of Lucknow, which ends with the former declaring before his students:

'... but my wife, alas ! would not listen to anything but — the custom — the custom of the whole village. I went with great reluctance, I performed the ceremony with still greater; yet I had no alternative if I valued harmony in my household: this I have now secured by my acquiescence in the simple desire of my wife. Should any evil accident befall my daughter or her husband, I am spared the reproaches that would have been heaped upon me, as being the cause of the evil... The mere compliance with this absurd custom, to secure peace and harmony, does not alter my faith; I have saved others from greater offences, by my passive obedience to the wishes of my wife, who ignorantly places dependance on the act, as necessary to her daughter's welfare.'⁶³

The modern and educated Col. Gardner, reconciles to the match arranged, against his will, for his beloved grand-daughter, with the plea "... her mother and the

61. William Foster ed., *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe*, 2, p.293.

62. Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, p.84.

63. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, pp.394-5.

Begam had set their hearts upon it; and you know, my *beti* (my child viz. Fanny Parks) women will have their own way."⁶⁴ While the perceptive missionary Buyers remarks:

'In India, as in Europe, a man either respects his wife's judgement sufficiently to make him wish to have her advice, or he stands in such awe of her resentment, as to make him very reluctant to proceed in any cause opposed to her will.'⁶⁵

Women appear to be clearly aware of their power. Upon the advice of her sister-in-law, Begam Jamal, to settle things quietly on their own for, 'brother-in-law will come round in the end', Begam Nihal sets the matrimonial proceedings for her son in motion, thinking herself that 'one day her husband would surely give his consent to the match if she persisted.' The power of this world, and the energetic forms it could assume, have been encapsulated by Parks in the following words:

'... to induce a native woman to give way to any reasons that are contrary to her own wishes is quite out of the power of mortal man. ... A native woman would only be violent, enraged, and sulky, until the man, tired and weary with the dispute and eternal worry, would give her own way.'⁶⁶

Confinement of women's space had another implication. By putting them in separate quarters and restricting their social mobility the patriarchal order provided them with a physical space that was exclusively theirs and private. This became a power with them as in its secrecy individual women could hatch intrigues to their advantage. That the *zenanas* were centres of intrigues is well documented, underlines that its inmates put the resource to good use. Hodges, a British artist

64. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.443.

65. Buyers, *Recollections of Northern India*, p.399.

66. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.435.

in India, said of them:

‘I cannot but here observe that, from the close confinement of the Mahomedan women, there reigns in the zananahs a refined spirit of intrigue, unknown in Europe in the present day.’⁶⁷

Intriguing, therefore, had become an art form. This was the most striking feature of the *zenana* that caught the wayward attention of Hodges whose interest in Indian society was only incidental. The artist’s emphasis on the intrigues of the native vis-a-vis the European women may be viewed as a response of greater powerlessness of the former. Parks observes: ‘Everything that passes without the four walls is reported to them by their spies: never was any place so full of intrigue, scandal, and chit-chat as a *zenana*’.⁶⁸ Manucci talks of the women’s mind dwelling on ‘nothing but malice’ — a confession made to him by the wife of the *wazir* of Aurangzeb⁶⁹, while Sleeman observes that the despotic influence of the mother over the son ‘produces much mischief even in the private families, but still more in sovereign ones.’⁷⁰

It were the *zenanas* of the polygamous households that were particularly vulnerable and notorious for intrigues. They were provoked, most importantly, by the struggle amongst the co-wives for space with the husband in order to create power by each as an individual over the others. Parks dwells:

‘A *zenana* is a place of intrigue, and those who live within its four walls cannot pursue a straight path: how can it be otherwise, where so many conflicting passions are called forth? If a man makes a present to one wife, he must make a similar offering to all the rest, to preserve peace and quietness.’⁷¹

67. William Hodges, *Travels in India During the Years 1780, 1781, & 1783* London, n.d., p.22.

68. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.450.

69. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.329.

70. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, 1, p.309.

71. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.391.

The wife of Aurangzeb's *wazir* also confessed to Manucci that 'her only thoughts were to imagine something by which she could please her husband and hinder his going near other women.'⁷² Talking about the imperial women's apartments, Dow comments: 'Jealousy itself, that most violent of the feelings of the soul, is curbed within the walls of the haram.'⁷³ Forbes mentions, as a matter of fact, the prevalence of 'jealousy, revenge, and other passions' in the Asiatic *zenanas*.⁷⁴ Pelsaert remarks that they 'hate each other secretly'.⁷⁵ Parks talks about their jealousies, and comments that the wives agreed as well as 'caged tigers' and quarrel all day.⁷⁶ Said Col. Gardner to her: "Nothing can exceed the quarrels that go on in the zenana, or the complaints the begams make against each other."⁷⁷ The struggle for power amongst them was of such intense kind that even children who from 'their cradles (were) taught to hate the children of other wives' became instruments.⁷⁸ Often, as Dow noticed, they inherited the petty squabbles of the *zenana* and 'the jealousy between mothers in the haram grows into hatred amongst the sons.'⁷⁹

A wife's power in the polygamous household grew by quantum leap if she produced an heir. This became another focus of intrigues. Tavernier writes:

'... when the Princesses in the imperial harem become aware that there is one among them with child, they immediately use all conceivable methods to cause a miscarriage.'⁸⁰

72. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.329.

73. Dow, *The History of Hindustan*, 3, p.xiv.

74. Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, 2, p.233.

75. Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, p.64-5.

76. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, pp.230-1, 390-1.

77. *Ibid.*, p.230.

78. *Ibid.*, p.391.

79. Dow, *The History of Hindustan*, 3, p.xviii.

80. Tavernier, *Travels*, 1, p.313.

Bibi Mubarika, a wife of Babur, to whom the Emperor was much devoted, was administered drugs to deprive her of motherhood. She died childless.⁸¹ While Tavernier, in 1666, was in Patna he was informed by Shaista Khan's surgeon that the noble's wife had, in one month, caused miscarriages to eight women of her husband's harem for 'she would not permit any children but her own to survive.'⁸²

Heirs could be manipulated, on which Parks has a rather captivating story:

'If a woman of high rank and consequence has no heir, this farce is often played. The lady appears to expect one; she is fattened up in the same curious manner in which they fatten their horses: five or six low caste women, who really expect children about the same time, are secreted in the zenana: when one of them is delivered of a son, the Begam takes it, the farce of an accouchement is acted, and the child is produced as the heir; the real mamma has 500 rupees (£50) given her, — and perhaps a dose of poison to secure her silence.'⁸³

Intrigues in the *zenana* had, indeed, become an art of the possible! Gulbadan Begam writes of a woman, newly taken into Humayun's harem, who kept up the farce of pregnancy for eleven months.⁸⁴ Clearly the question of power and space was so critical to the women that they had no compunction in cheating the husband into an heir in whose veins did not flow the legitimate blood, and practice the ultimate fraud on patriarchy. In the final outcome it was the perceived — not empirical — legitimacy of the heir that counted. Thus succession, which lacked a developed appanage system, also infested the *zenanas* with much intrigues. Buyers comments: 'Thrones have been established and overthrown by (women's) intrigues...'⁸⁵ It is seen to have catalysed all their vigorous energies and base

81. Gulbadan Begam, *Humayun-Namah*, p.266.

82. Tavernier, *Travels*, 1, p.313.

83. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.392.

84. Gulbadan Begam, *Humayun-Namah*, pp.112-3.

85. Buyers, *Recollections of Northern India*, p.397.

instincts. It may be relevant to point out that Col. Todd thought of the Rajput *zenana* a place where intrigue is 'enthroned'.⁸⁶ One therefore finds that, at the existential level, the *zenanas* were far from an ordered place where its inmates had internalized the norms ordained by the patriarchal structure.

It would appear from the above analyses that confinement did not produce a *zenana* full of a sea of ignorance and inmates whose mental faculties had atrophied. Far from debilitating their minds, it compelled women to depend upon their native intelligence and instincts in ways that the men were utterly ill-equipped to cope with. We have a wonderful story: When Khusrau rebelled in 1606 against his father, Jahangir, it was discovered that he had received assistance from Mirza Aziz Koka, his father-in-law, who was also the foster-brother of Akbar. The *mirza* was apprehended and a day arrived when deliberations were held to decide on inflicting capital punishment. Participating in them from behind the screen were Salima Sultan Begam, Akbar's widow, and some women of the harem pleading the case of the *mirza*. It so happened that while the deliberations were on, the Begam, throwing the fact of her seclusion to the wind, yelled out: "Your Majesty, all the Begams are assembled in the *zenana* for the purpose of interceding for Mirza Aziz Koka. It will be better if you come there, otherwise they will come to you."⁸⁷ This was quite an unprecedented situation and Jahangir was constrained to go to the *zenana* and was persuaded into pardoning the *mirza*.

Nur Jahan had such complete grasp over Jahangir's personality that not only did she know of the vulnerable moment to extract from him whatever she desired but also knew the art of going about it. Pelsaert recounts an everyday

86. James Todd, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, ed. William Crooke, 3 vols., Oxford, 1920, 1, p.358, in Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, p.51.

87. Shah Nawaz Khan, *Ma'asir al-Umara*, 1, p.328.

happening: After a quarter of night had passed in his private audience chamber, the Emperor high on a couple of drinks, dismissed his nobles and became ready for bed. His three cups had made him so 'happy' that he was more disposed to rest than to keep awake. This was the time when his wife, with her female slaves, descended and undressing him they teased and fondled him as if he were a child. The Emperor thus rendered totally malleable, Nur Jahan obtained whatever she desired and got always 'yes', and hardly ever 'no', in reply.⁸⁸

The European sources highlight the proficiency of women in different arenas. Even as Mrs. Meer Hassan found that they had 'naturally good understandings'⁸⁹ Dubois remarks: '... in the management of the domestic business, they in general show a shrewdness, a savingness, and an intelligence which would do honour to the best housewives in Europe.'⁹⁰ For business, in general, Buyers comments, they displayed 'considerable tact and aptitude,' and could not be 'easily outwitted by the cunning tricks of dishonest lawyers.'⁹¹ And going back to Dubois the women from the lower orders, employed as shopkeepers: '... without a knowledge of the alphabet, or of the decimal scale, ... keep by other means their accounts in excellent order, and are considered as still shrewder than the males in their commercial dealings'.⁹²

Instincts of curiosity and alertness are seen to have honed amongst the confined inmates of the *zenana*. Foreign travellers were routinely astonished to find themselves the objects of intense inspection by women they could not see.

88. Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, p.53.

89. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.313.

90. Dubois, *Letters on the State of Christianity*, p.183.

91. Buyers, *Recollections of Northern India*, p.398.

92. Dubois, *Letters on the State of Christianity*, pp.189-90.

intervals. There is a fertility of imagination, a power of expression, inherent in the mind, and vocal ability, of an Asiatic... female, which cannot be engendered in the cold head of an European...⁹⁹

And it was the confined space of women which had honed them as power-brokers and mediators.

Finally, the widow — confined of the confined — may not quite have been such a helpless women as she is assumed to be. While Sleeman has highlighted the power of a widowed mother in sovereign families¹⁰⁰, Forster found many of the Hindu widows acquired by their ability, wealth, connection, or intrigue the possession of extensive power and influence.¹⁰¹ Speaking of widows from lower orders, Dubois writes: 'I am acquainted with industrious widows, who, having undertaken a small trade with a trifling capital of forty or fifty rupees, have, by their economy, their labours, and industry, increased it, within these past ten years, to the amount of five or six hundred'.¹⁰² Evidently in their very widowhood lay resources, unfathomable, of power and space for women.

It, therefore, transpires that the very limiting of women's roles was turned by them into resources for self-assertion. The entire discussion above belies the assumptions of abject subjugation and the images/perceptions it throws up. To think that women had no intellectual activity is also misplaced, for, at the imperial level at least, we do know of their literary accomplishments: Gulbadan was a master of feminine prose; Nur Jahan wrote accomplished verses, especially the one engraved on her tomb in Lahore; Aurangzeb's daughter, Zeb-un-Nissa, was

99. Forster, George, *A Journey from Bengal to England, Through the Northern Part of India, Kashmere, Afganistan, and Persia and into Russia by the Caspean Sea*, 2 vols., Patiala, 1970.

100. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, 1, p.309.

101. Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, 1, p.68.

102. Dubois, *Letters on the State of Christianity*, p.190.

'professional' enough as poet to assume the *takhallus*, 'Makhafi' (Concealed). The creativity of their world is testified in the idiomatic inventiveness of the *Begmati Zaban* which received a recognition in the adoption of the usages by the Urdu language of men.¹⁰³

However, it is necessary to emphasize, that the power/space a woman created also depended on the capabilities, skills, or gifts she possessed as an individual, so that one, through her grit and determination, might ultimately storm the bastion of male power. We have rather extraordinary sketches on the form it assumed. Describing the transactions of state business by Qudsiya Begam, which like Nur Jahan's were in person, a court historian says: 'Daily the high officers used to go and sit down at her *deodhi* and she used to hold discussions with them from behind a screen (through the medium of eunuchs); all petitions (*mutalib*) of the realm and closed envelopes that were sent into the harem were read out to her and she passed orders on them, which were final.'¹⁰⁴ When the British Resident at Delhi, Holford, would visit the emperor, Akbar Shah II, for routine official matters, the latter's women not only attended the conference, seated behind the screen, but carried out the conversations, and in a manner, that the emperor himself took little part, but 'occasionally explaining or confirming such of their observation as had reference to his own feelings or wishes.'¹⁰⁵

Then there is always the unpredictable chance factor in life. For instance

103. Says the poet Insha: 'Any word, whether it be of Arabic origin or of Persian, Syrian or Turkish, Punjabi or Eastern (of east U.P. or Bihar), Marwari or Deccani, Bundelkhandi or any other, once it gets into circulation among Shahjahanabad's women, it gets accepted as an Urdu word.' Insha, *Darya-i Latafat*, p.136.

104. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 1, p.166.

105. In Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Mughals*, reprint, Delhi, 1969, p.41.

see-through garments; they usually stand in a garden, with either a book of verses or a flower, especially narcissus flower in their hand, waiting for a rendezvous. Often they are depicted savouring wine in a very seductive milieu; not infrequently the meeting of lovers itself has been captured. Clearly then, the vision of womanhood per se for the elite of that society conformed to the image of sensuality, not generically different from the projection in the bazaar and the prying eyes of Europeans. What is important to us, however, is the violation of the normative structure by them.

Instances of women's sexual infractions are interesting in that they concern the highest level of the royalty — a level where not only the controls were of the severest kind but which were socially exclusive, and where patriarchy was most assertive and comprehensive. Jahan-Ara, the most intimidating figure in Shahjahan's empire, next to the emperor, is reported to have had lovers. The principal one was a handsome youth, the son of the chief dancer in her employ. He sang well and had so charmed the princess that she bestowed upon him the epithets of *Dulera* (Always a Bridegroom) and *Khanazad* (Born of the House). She showered upon him much favours — a rank as of a commander, a number of standards — and he became famous in Shahjahanabad as the princess' great favourite.¹⁰⁷ Two of Jahan-Ara's dalliances, however, when discovered ended in tragic consequences. The first involved a young, agreeable man, of not very exalted rank, whose visits the princess is said to have received in her *seraglio*. As the news of the affair reached Shahjahan's ears, he decided to visit the apartments of his daughter, unannounced, and at the opportune time. Caught unaware by the arrival of her father, the princess caused the affrighted youth to conceal himself in a capacious cauldron used for bath. The Emperor's countenance suggested nothing

107. Manucci, *Storia*, 1, p.210.

and talked to his daughter normally ending, though, by observing that the state of her skin showed a neglect of the customary ablutions. He commanded the eunuchs to light fire under the cauldron, ostensibly for the princess' bath, but did not leave until they gave him to understand that the hapless victim had been boiled to a gory death.¹⁰⁸

However this did not prevent Jahan-Ara from another tryst. This time the young man that caught the princess' fancy was her steward (*Khan Saman*), a Persian called Nazr Khan, remarkable for grace and accomplishments of the mind, full of spirit and ambition, and the favourite of the whole court. When the affair came to the knowledge of the Emperor, he hastened to bump him off with artifice. In an open court, before all, Shahjahan, conferring favour upon Nazr Khan offered a *pan* (betel) with his own hand, but which had been laced with poison. As custom required, the unsuspecting youth was obliged to masticate it forthwith, and indulging in dreams of future bliss, withdrew from the palace, ascended his *palki*, only to die before he reached home.¹⁰⁹

It is interesting that the discovery of Jahan-Ara's dalliances did not alter her relationship with her father. She remained his favourite child, most trusted, growing in power and influence each day.

The princess' younger sister, Raushan-Ara, was not far behind. Two of her lovers — in separate incidents — were found roving in the gardens of the palace-fortress after the trysts. They were produced before Aurangzeb, the emperor then, whose puritanism notwithstanding, treated the young men with remarkable benignance. He merely interrogated them, which having yielded nothing incriminating, dismissed them and asked, cryptically, to leave the palace

108. Bernier, *Travels*, pp.12-3. For an alternate version of the story see Manucci, *Storia*, 1, p.209.

109. Bernier, *Travels*, pp.13-4.

by the same path they had wandered in from, viz. scaling the walls of the *seraglio* for one, and the regular gate of it for the other. Upon the eunuchs, however, Aurangzeb determined to inflict exemplary punishment for failure to perform their duty.¹¹⁰ In another incident, Raushan-Ara, after keeping the lover for twenty days, grew tired, and wished to get rid of him without the Emperor discovering. She therefore informed the latter that a man had entered her apartment to rob and kill her. When Aurangzeb came to the spot, the youth, affrighted, jumped out of the window into the Jamuna. A crowd gathered to catch him but the Emperor suspecting his sister's misdemeanor asked the unfortunate man not to be killed and instead be taken to the chief *qazi*.¹¹¹ A rather fascinating story on the dalliances of Raushan-Ara has been narrated by no one else but Manucci. He says that the princess had hidden nine youths in her apartment for her diversion. The affairs discovered, this time, by the daughter of Aurangzeb, Fakhr al-Nissa Begam, who asked the aunt to make over 'at least' one to her. The aunt refused the neicés 'importunity' who moved by 'envy' divulged to the Emperor the escapades. The apartment of Raushan-Ara was searched, the youths discovered, declared thieves, and were made over to the *Kotwal* who, it is said, had them secretly exterminated.¹¹² Upon her death, the princess, if Manucci is to be believed, left behind a name of 'great lasciviousness'.¹¹³

Shahjahan's and Aurangzeb's attitude towards the sexual infractions of the princesses are rather instructive. Contrary to the normative structure, the response at the existential level displays a certain degree of tolerance. The infractions are allowed to pass, until, they are established beyond doubt revealing,

110. Bernier, *Travels*, pp.132-3.

111. Tavernier, *Travels*, 1, p.300.

112. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.177.

113. *Ibid.*, 2, p.177.

thereby, that their prevalence was so far from unusual that silence, or dissembling, became the desirable response. This is reinforced by the fact that even the lovers were treated with mildness until the indisputable, public discovery. Understandably it were the eunuchs who were punished for negligence of duty. Upon discovery, too, reprisals were not meted upon the princesses but the lovers. If the lovers were the victims, the reason seems to have been an assertion of imperial power and exclusivity which could scarcely be perceived to withstand such intimacy of its women once it was public.

Then there was Zeb-un-Nissa Begam, daughter of Aurangzeb. Although, beautiful and an accomplished poet, her reputation is said to have been so enmeshed in tales of love episodes that they have obscured her talents as a poet.¹¹⁴ Shivaji, the arch enemy of her father, was rumoured to have been the hero of her dreams!¹¹⁵

The account of Manucci leaves us with the impression that, far from smothering, seclusion ignited sexual desire amongst the royal women so powerfully that they seized every opportunity to gratify it. Evidences indicate that *salatines* or *khanzads*, physicians, eunuchs or menials, all whosoever was allowed into the *seraglio*, could become targets of their propositions. However, we can amplify only upon the overtures to physicians. Himself a physician, Manucci gives an autobiographical account:

‘There are some (women) who from time to time affect the invalid, simply that they may have the chance of some conversation with, and have their pulse felt by, the physician who comes to see them. The latter stretches out his hand inside the curtain; they lay hold of it, kiss it, and softly bite it. Some, out of curiosity, apply it to their

114. M.A. Ansari, *Social Life of the Mughal Emperors*, p.89.

115. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, p.118.

Confessing to Manucci, the wife of Aurangzeb's *wazir*, mentioned women's mind dwelling on nothing but 'lewdness'.¹²⁰ Observations of Manucci about life at the highest echelons of the court have been presaged by Pelsaert:

'Some of the nobles, again, have chaste wives, but they are too few to be worth mentioning; most of the ladies are tarred with the same brush, and when the husband is away, though he may think they are guarded quite safely by his eunuchs, they are too clever for Argus himself with his hundred eyes, and get all the pleasure they can, though not so much as they desire.'¹²¹

The cases of women cited above bring home some perspectives. The observation made above of men's silence, or dissembling — suggesting a degree of tolerance — over women's sexual infractions is reinforced, what with the husbands also in know of them. Nowhere, in the sources, have we come across evidence that a marriage dissolved on account of adultery, though it would still be hard for us to assert that adultery was generally accepted. Such adjustments were impelled by the compulsion to protect the family which being sacred made, at the existential level, every normative demand really secondary. Further, these affairs which were extra-marital, in no way conflicted with women's commitment to their marriage or husband. The wife of Jafar Khan, in fact, saved her husband's life. Like men, women too could make distinction between their love/sexual and conjugal/family lives. This suggests that sex in medieval society had a certain autonomy which has been robbed of in the modern society where it has growingly become confused with emotions; monogamy evidently is not a biological constraint.

If at the imperial level the physicians illustrate the use women made of every opportunity to gratify their sexual desire, then at the aristocratic level the

120. *Ibid.*, 2, p.329.

121. Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, p.68.

eunuchs would demonstrate the same. Pelsaert observes unequivocally:

'... many, or perhaps most of them (wives of nobles), so far forget themselves, that, when their husband has gone away, either to Court, or to some place where he takes only his favourite wife, and leaves the rest at home, they allow the eunuch to enjoy them according to his ability, and thus gratify their burning passions when they have no opportunity of going out; but otherwise they spare no craft or trouble to enable them to enjoy themselves outside.'¹²²

Besides, Manucci mentions that eunuchs were favourites of the princesses who from time to time got permission to enjoy them.¹²³ Javed Khan, the lover of Qudsiya Begam, was a eunuch. Similarly the aunt and prospective mother-in-law of the *wazir*, Imad al-Mulk, had many eunuch lovers.¹²⁴ Clearly medieval society knew ways of sexual gratification other than the conventional ones. The immense clout acquired by the eunuch-lovers in matters of state reflects upon the power that could flow to paramours on account of the liaison with powerful women. This suggests that, like men, women too could abuse power for sexual purposes. Thus Sleeman observes that ministers in order to secure influence became paramours, or made the world believe so, of the women who selected them.¹²⁵

Sexual infractions at levels below the royalty - aristocracy are underscored in the stylized verses of Bihari even as they illustrate the types of amours happening in circumscribed space. The kins and the neighbourhood are found vulnerable:

What one of her companions said to another
Whenever the flowers,
thrown playfully at her
by her husband's younger brother

122. Ibid., p.66.

123. Manucci, *Storia*,

124. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 2, p.

125. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, 1, p.310.

who was her paramour,
 struck her,
 welts of joy
 appeared on her limbs !
 Mistaking them for insect-bites
 I hastened
 with the jar of ointment,
 but when she smiled
 I guessed the truth
 and stayed my hands¹²⁶

What an elderly woman neighbour said to her

Young woman,
 why do you alone
 wander about lamenting
 when all others
 are lustily singing
 and gleefully making merry
 in your brother-in-law's
 wedding celebrations?
 Is it because
 you yourself are in love with him?¹²⁷

What one of her companions said to another:

Standing on tiptoe
 and throwing their weight
 on the wall
 between the balconies,
 they glanced furtively all around
 with restless eyes
 and leaning forward
 kissed.¹²⁸

What one of her companions said to another

Clasp ing each other's hand
 through the hole
 in the partition wall

126. Bihari, *Satsai*, p.67, Verse: 66.

127. Ibid., pp.154-5, Verse: 294.

128. Ibid., p.90, Verse: 126.

The other story, according to Bernier, was on every person's mouth and 'universally credited'. As it went: A Hindu woman in love with her neighbour — a Muslim tailor and a tambourine player — poisoned her husband, hoping that the former would marry her. Hastening to the lover, and informing him of what she had done, she asked him to fulfill his promise of marrying her, and urged him to flee the place without delay, lest custom constrain her to perform *sati*. The lover, however, fearing the implications of the step refused, and the woman informed her relatives about the death of her husband. Arrangements for the immolation readied, the woman took a round of the funeral pit, bidding farewell to her relatives assembled before jumping into it. Amongst the assembled was the tailor who had been invited to play on the tambourine along with other musicians. Approaching him, as if to say goodbye, the woman, enraged, seized the tailor by the collar, and dragging him to the edge of the pit, descended into it along with him in.¹³²

Apart from reflecting the insidious turn an urge to express themselves romantically/sexually could take amongst some women, the significance of the story lies in the conflict it brings out between the pressures of the normative structure upon them as a category and their assertions against it as individuals. Thus the Hindu woman immolates herself on the very pyre of the husband whom she had bumped off but not without redressing the betrayal of the lover. The dichotomy is attested in a lighter vein, by a verse of Bihari:

What one of her companions said to another

Her eyes were brimming with tears
 when the moment came
 for her husband's departure,
 but when he entrusted the house

132. Ibid., pp.311-2.

to his neighbour
 who was her secret lover,
 she flashed a sudden smile.¹³³

The strength of the conjugal relationship at the institutional level and its weakness at the individual level is vividly demonstrated. The extremity of the measures women were likely to take is highlighted also by Sleeman who says that many a princess in India poisoned the husband to enjoy the society of her paramour more freely.¹³⁴

By way of creating a sexual space for themselves anything could be converted into a resource by the women. When they moved out from their confined space, which was mostly for religious purposes, the pilgrimage became one. The relative freedom and anonymity of it provided them with an opportunity for trysts.

Pelsaert writes that at the *dargah* of Prince Khusrau in Agra:

'Under pretext of a pilgrimage they (women) used to come without reproach to see, and perhaps even speak to their lovers. Assignations were made in the gardens, which are numerous in the neighborhood, and there passion was given the food for which it hungered, and for which, in the case of many, no opportunity could be found on any other day. On such occasions new passions were aroused by the sight of a handsome youth, who took the lady's fancy, and while *she* saw *him*, *he* might not be able to see *her*.'¹³⁵

Dargah Quli Khan, in *Muraqqa-i Dehli*, has drawn many a vivid portraits of such indulgences he encountered at the *dargahs* of Delhi.¹³⁶ It may be recalled that over two centuries earlier, Firoz Shah, to prevent the sexual use the *dargahs* were put to, banned women from visiting them.

133. Bihari, *Satsai*, p.151, Verse: 285.

134. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, 1, p.309.

135. Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, p.72.

136. This has been discussed in detail below, Ch.4.

The initiative taken by women in these relationships emerges with remarkable clarity [See Plate VII]. There are, however, instances so bold where women are found to throw all caution to the wind, and against all odds, realize a love denied by the structure. One is a rather adventurous tale involving the wife of the brother of Mughal emperor, Akbar Shah II. The woman, Malka Begam, was on a visit to her sister at Lucknow, who was the wife of the Nawab of Awadh. Of extreme beauty as she was, the Nawab fell instantly in love and detained her against her will. Col. Gardner, related by marriage to the imperial family of Delhi, was indignant at the conduct of the Nawab. His modern monogamous sensibilities, as well as his Christian sensibility disapproving of incest, could scarcely have tolerated it, for, it was a married man who was propositioning a married woman, who was his sister-in-law. He brought Malka Begam from Lucknow, placed her in the care of his own *zenana*, only to have her and his own son fall hopelessly in love. A romance so passionate sprung up that they decided to elope. An infuriated Col. Gardner would not have anything to do with his son who for two years lived in the jungle with his beloved. Reconciliation came about only when the son excited the paternal sentiments of the Colonel. Malka Begam was divorced and legally married to her lover. It may be noticed that the entire drama of romance, divorce, and marriage unfolded within the network of family and relatives.¹³⁷

Another tale concerns the daughter of the chief *qazi* in Aurangzeb's empire, Abdul Wahab, the highest religious personage. Having learnt, that the Emperor was marrying off his daughters and nieces, the *qazi's* daughter also wished to get married. The father, however, had no such intentions, for, apart from taking care of the house, she managed his finances. The daughter therefore worked out a strategy by which not only did she marry but was able to have the marriage blessed

137. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, pp.381-2.

by the father. She struck up a romance with a young man in the neighbourhood, who came and visited her, the *qazi* suspecting nothing. Then the daughter left her house in a covered *palki*, but not before she had sent the wealth to a safe place. The daughter and the youth appeared before the public audience of the *qazi* and represented that they had made a vow to be married by him. The *qazi*, easily taken in by the ruse, asked the lady in the *palki* if she consented to marry the youth. Disguising her voice, she answered 'yes', and the *qazi* performed the ceremony and dismissed them. The couple thence, fearing that the *qazi* using his influence might try to get the marriage annulled if he discovered, hastened to inform the Emperor and got him to act the godfather. The puritan ruler merely laughed over the affair, summoned Abdul Wahab before he reached home and found the daughter absconding, and congratulated him on what he had done without mentioning a word of the marriage or anything else. The *qazi* perplexed, started for home only to discover upon reaching it his daughter eloped, together with a liberal portion of his wealth. The shock is said to have made him so ill as to cause his death. Thus the *qazi's* daughter created her space even as subscribing to the structural norms in that not only did she marry lawfully, but had the marriage duly blessed by the father.¹³⁸ What is interesting in the story is the manipulation of the *palki*, otherwise meant for secluding women, by the *qazi's* daughter into an instrument for liberating herself.

The above analysis reveals that life of women in the *havelis* possessed an internal dynamism which gave it a certain autonomy. This implied that the ordering by the patriarchal structure notwithstanding, women had a degree of control over their time [See Plates X, XI]. The tenor of their world reflects the extent to which it had developed an independent momentum. It was both an

138. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, pp.176-7.

expression of the feminine collectivity as well as individuality, infused with feminine vibrancy, gossip, and hustle-bustle, one from which men had been eased out. Its sociability and liveliness has been widely commented upon. The *zenana*, therefore, was far from a place where its inmates were bleeding under the subjugation of patriarchy and before which they were helpless. One could, perhaps, empathise with Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali who found the existential reality so contrary to her assumptions that the feelings of pity or regret she had for these women began to recede.

Masters and Servants

The structure of society had established between masters and servants of the *havelis* a relationship that was inclusive-exclusive. This generated the resources for servants to create power and expand space for themselves as individuals which explains the conflicting evidences we come across on their responses.

The inclusive character of the relationship provoked in the servants an immense loyalty towards their masters, a virtue with which the medieval times have today come to be identified, and its absence in our own lives lamented. Sources are full of instances of it and have servants following doomed masters till the very end. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali's observation: 'Here I find the master and mistress of a family receive the utmost veneration from their slaves and domestics...' underscores, perhaps, a certain sense of their loyalty.¹³⁹ De Laet has praised the faithfulness of 'heathen' servants who look after foreign travellers so well that they can journey in perfect safety in all directions.¹⁴⁰ Their financial honesty has been remarked upon by Dubois:

139. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.3.

140. De Laet, *The Empire of the Great Mogol*, p.83.

'It is... a known fact that (instances of) servants, on a salary of eight or ten shillings per mensem, and often intrusted by their masters with large sums of money, and sent to their correspondents at a distance of, perhaps two or three hundred miles or further, to purchase goods, or for other purposes... running away with the money intrusted..., or, otherwise embezzling it, are very rare.'¹⁴¹

The sense of loyalty they could possess has, in particular, been commended amongst the eunuchs. Pelsaert writes that they were usually faithful to their masters¹⁴², while Bernier comments that 'many among them are exceedingly faithful, generous, and brave.'¹⁴³ And Mrs Meer Hassan Ali says: '... this class of beings are generally faithfully attached to the interest and welfare of their employer; they are much in confidence of their master and mistress, and very seldom betray their trust.'¹⁴⁴ It is interesting that, of the servants, the eunuchs, have been noticed for the enjoyment of power, privileges, and favours. It were they who had the most freedom to arrange contracts outside the *zenana* in matters of trade, military manoeuvres, courtly intrigues, and secret communications.¹⁴⁵ They were a conduit for favours¹⁴⁶, and Bernier informs us that to retain the favour of the emperor a governor must, amongst others, court a eunuch.¹⁴⁷ Through them even the husband's favour could be obtained by the wife.¹⁴⁸ The generosity of their masters often made them 'rich and honourable.'¹⁴⁹ Clearly, then, there was a

141. Dubois, *Letters on the State of Christianity*, p.162.

142. Pelsaert's, *Jahangir's India*, p.65.

143. Bernier, *Travels*, p.132.

144. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, pp.70-1.

145. Findly, *Nur Jahan*, p.98.

146. Findly, *Nur Jahan*, p.98

147. Bernier, *Travels*, pp.230-1.

148. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.74.

149. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 1, p.71; also Tavernier, 1, 89.

connection between the loyalty of eunuchs and the importance, wealth, and influence they acquired. In other words, it was their loyalty which became a resource to create power and space for themselves. Thus it could only have been loyalty which took two servants of Abdullah Khan, the *wazir* of Shah Alam, to the highest position in the state. They were said to be its 'pillars' and all favours required their recommendation. Of them one kept an appearance far more 'sumptuous than any of the prince'.¹⁵⁰

The eunuchs generated resources from the structure of relationship in other ways too. In charge of guarding the chastity of women they were, like the nurses, placed at the heart of the private world of the *havelis* and the governing notion of family honour, manifest as public acknowledgement of their women's sexual inviolability. The sensitivity of this position created a resource which enabled them to become a conduit of favours noted above. To put it differently, the very quality of their inclusiveness became a power with them. Duties of eunuchs called for spying on the inmates of the *zenana* and informing the masters of all their activities. It did not require much ingenuity to turn it into a resource for personal aggrandizement, considering, that the exclusion of servants from the masters lives could make the master but a master for the eunuchs. Manucci has described eunuchs as 'sort of brute', prey to their own base emotions of greed, pride, and hypocrisy.¹⁵¹ While Bernier, in the same breath as he recommends them, says that in the eyes of people there was not one amongst them who was not 'vicious, arrogant and cruel'.¹⁵² Inverting their function of guarding their mistress, they

150. Antoine Louis Henri Polier, *Shah Alam II and His Court: A Narrative of the Transactions at the Court of Delhy from the year 1771 to the Present Time*, ed. Pratul C. Gupta, p.75.

151. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.74.

152. Bernier, *Travels*, p.132.

became accomplices in their subterranean life of amours and dalliances, getting whatever they desired from them — ‘fine horses to ride, servants to attend them outside, and female slaves inside the house, clothes as fine and smart as their master himself.’¹⁵³ The chief eunuch of Jahan-Ara was famous for his complicity in her affairs and ‘sought every mode of gratifying her, seeing the great interest he had not to work against her.’¹⁵⁴ Thus the very nature of their duties became a power over their mistress, providing immense potential to exploit them. The cheating it entailed spelled a degree of subversion of the hegemony of their masters, and when they themselves became lovers of their mistresses, somewhere a getting at them for the castration they had inflicted. Such was the space the eunuchs could craft for themselves that, De Laet, believed the chief eunuch to be one of the chief ministers of the Court.¹⁵⁵ Some consolation it was for their sexlessness which may have spurred them to acquire it in the first place.

At the core of the self-assertions of the servants, as the case of eunuchs highlights, lay financial cheating of the masters, manifest particularly in small thefts of everyday life. Pelsaert writes:

‘Very few of them serve their masters honestly; they steal whatever they can; if they buy only a pice-worth of food, they will take their share or *dasturi* (commission). The masters sometimes know this very well, but they suppose it is paid by the poor, and not out of their pockets; in this, however, they are mistaken, because the commission is always taken into account in the sale. Otherwise it would be impossible for the servants to feed themselves and their families on such low wages...’¹⁵⁶

153. Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, p.66; Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.74.

154. Manucci, *Storia*, 1, p.212.

155. De Laet, *Empire of the Great Mogol*, p.94.

156. Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, pp.62-3.

De Laet echoes similar views.¹⁵⁷ Parks talks of the 'commission' (*dasturi*) appropriated in the purchases entrusted to them.¹⁵⁸ The thefts could make a mother, in *Majalis-un-Nissa*, recommend her daughter the following strategy:

'Now I am going to tell you how to get things from the bazaar day by day, so that (the servants) don't pilfer... You should ask all those who come to the house from outside (the water carrier, the potter, the miller women, the bangle-sellers) what the current market prices are. Ask them periodically, and when you detect a discrepancy between the reported price and what you paid, scold severely the servant who did the shopping. Get into the habit of buying those commodities for which there is no fear of spoilage, like oil, spices, *gur*, sugar cardamoms, tobacco and lime for *paan*, etc., when they are in season... The remaining things, like fresh vegetables, meat, yoghurt, and milk have to be procured on a daily basis. For those, it is not good always to send the same person... Vary the person whom you send to do the shopping. That will keep the servants on their toes.'¹⁵⁹

It is questionable whether it were the servants or the masters who were on their toes.

Dishonesty became the mode in which servants sought to recompense themselves for their paltry wages and abject subjugation. That the masters were aware of it, and yet the state of affairs continued, suggests that a general dependence on their services caused them to close their eyes and not the naivety pointed out by Pelsaert. Thus there appears a degree of tolerance in the native households for thefts of servants. Dependence of masters and servants was

157. De Laet, *The Empire of the Great Mogol*, p.90.

158. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, pp.22, 101, 104, 449, 450.

159. The translation is by Minault. Gail Minault, *Voices of Silence* (English translation of Khwaja Altaf Husain Hali's *Majalis-un-Nissa* and *Chup ki Dad*), Delhi, 1986.

mutual, conferring on the servants too a share of power to erode the structure of relationship. The power they derived from it was both as a category and as individuals.

There were other ways, too, for servants to explore and expand their space vis-a-vis their masters. In the contemporary accounts servants are referred to as being idle, slack, and lazy.¹⁶⁰ This is a classic complaint by masters everywhere against slaves and servants and reflects the masters' world-view; inverted to reflect the view perhaps unconscious, at the other end, it would as classically convey the servants daily silent protest against the bond of servitude to which they had been tied beyond redemption. The protest expressed itself in their behaviour. Parks is particularly eloquent: 'They are great plagues', says she, 'much more troublesome than English servant.'¹⁶¹ At another place she comments: '... I find it quite difficult enough to keep them in order; they quarrel amongst themselves, and when they become quite outrageous, they demand their discharge.'¹⁶² She particularly notes their insolence.¹⁶³ Perhaps the most comprehensive observation on self-assertions of servants, and the power which dependency of masters gave them, is by Manucci making one wonder who the real masters were:

Verily it produces desperation to be dependent on the men and women slaves of India. In them is no goodness; they are full of malice, generally thieves, false, traitors, deniers, slothful, loquacious; incapable of secrecy, devoid of love and fidelity, forever complaining of their masters. Treat them tenderly as your children, and they behave the worse; and to get any work done you must act

160. Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, p.62; Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, pp.22, 449.

161. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 1, p.26.

162. *Ibid.*, 1, p.140, also p.211.

163. *Ibid.*, 1, p.449.

against them harshly and make them do their duty by force. They serve you by fear of blows, and not from duty or love. Generally speaking, the free servants are just the same.¹⁶⁴

Finally, Pelsaert has some interesting observations. He says: "If, however, the master holds office or power, the servants are arrogant, oppressing the innocent, and sinning on the strength of their masters greatness",¹⁶⁵ or '... servants of the lords may justly be described as a generation of inequity, greed and oppression, for, like their masters, they make hay while the sun shines.'¹⁶⁶ We have earlier observed similar characteristics identifying the eunuchs. Clearly hegemony of the masters had no mellowing impact upon the servants where it concerned their own instincts for power and dominance. On the other hand, they sought to establish lines of correspondence between their masters power and their own vis-a-vis the third parties.

To sum up, one may quote Bernier and define the power the powerless could create and the ramifications it could have:

'If the spectre be not firmly grasped by the first minister, then the country is governed by the King's mother, originally a wretched slave, and by a set of eunuchs, persons who possess no enlarged and liberal views of policy, and who employ their time in barbarous intrigues; banishing, imprisoning, and strangling each other, and frequently the *Grandeess* and the *Vizier* himself. Indeed, under their disgraceful domination, not many of any property is sure of his life for a single day (Emphases added).¹⁶⁷

The emphasized articulate the extreme in the continuum of powerlessness and the power they created or had the potential of creating.

164. Manucci, *Storia*, 2, p.420.

165. Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, p.62.

166. *Ibid.*, p.64.

167. Bernier, *Travels*, p.146.

Patterns of Social, Religious, and Cultural Life

As discussed in the introduction the eighteenth century evokes diverse, frequently conflicting images. From the foot of the throne historians did project an end-of-the-world syndrome, an image which finds a lyrical expression in the poetry of the period. The poets, most of them belonging to the imperial capital, mourned the passing of Mughal glory and a civilization they loved. They were pained and anguished at the loss of a world they identified with and saw its destruction in their beloved Delhi. The dirges they sang are poignant and have been left behind in the *Shahr Ashob*. Thus, Mir, the melancholic of all, said:

اس عہد کو نہ جانے اگلا سا عہد تیر
وہ دور اب نہیں وہ زمیں آسماں نہیں

This age is not like any other gone by, Mir
The times have changed, the earth and sky have changed.

Delhi, their world, was ruined, desolate, and deserted:

اڑتی ہے خاک شہر کی گلیوں میں اب جہاں
سونا لیا ہے گود میں بھر کر وہیں سے ہم

Here in this city where dust drifts in deserted lanes
We had collected gold by the lapful in days gone by.

کل دیکھتے ہمارے بستے تھے گھر برابر
اب یہ کہیں کہیں جو دیوار و در رہے ہیں

These eyes saw only yesterday house after house
Where now a ruined wall or doorway stands

ہیں مکان و سرا و جا خالی یار سب کوچ کر گئے شاید

Houses, *serais*, and all places bear a deserted look
All friends and companions appear to have departed

اب خرابہ ہو جہاں آباد
ورنہ ہر اک قدم پیاں گھر تھا

Jahanabad now lies in ruins
Otherwise there was a house at every step.

If Mir's voice is tearful then that of Mirza Rafi Sauda (1713-81), the other master poet of the city, is abrasive:

سخن جو شہر کی ویرانی سے کروں آغاز
تو اس کو سن کے کریں ہوش چند کے پرواز
نہیں وہ گھر، نہ ہو جس میں شغال کی آواز
کوئی جو شام کو، مسجد میں جائے بہر نماز

تو واں چراغ نہیں ہے، بجز چراغِ غول

How can I describe the desolation of Delhi ?
Hearing it even the owl would be shocked
There is no house where the jackal does not howl
The mosques remain deserted in the evenings
And save will-o'-the-wisp no lamp lights them

To the poet no one in the city is with a fire-place or a millstone. Only one house in a hundred has a lamp burning, but that is a stain. Vermin crawl in places where in former days men used to welcome the onset of spring with music and rejoicings. God knows which evil eye has devastated this beautiful garden. It once had tall beautiful trees and nightingales sing, now it has wild growth where crows and kites warble. In the villages around young women no longer come to draw water from the wells and stand talking under the shady trees. The villages are deserted,

the trees are gone, and the wells are full of corpses. He says movingly:

جہاں آباد تو کب اس ستم کے قابل تھا
مگر کبھی کسی عاشق کا یہ نگر دل تھا
کہ یوں اٹھا دیا گویا کہ نقشِ باطل تھا

Jahanabad you did not deserve this terrible fate
To be erased like an impression that never existed
At one time you were like the heart of a lover

Gracious and cultured people of the city had been devastated:

دیا بھی وہاں نہیں روشن تھے جس جگہ فانوس
پڑے ہیں کھنڈروں میں، آئینہ خانوں کے مانوس

Not even a lamp of clay burns where once shone chandeliers
Those who lived in palaces of mirrors now dwell the ruins.

Women of noble birth, veiled like plebians, stand in the street carrying a child in their arms, fresh as a rose; ashamed to ask for alms they seek it in the beautiful guise of offering rosaries, made from the holy clay of Karbala, for sale. In the eyes of the city's poets the nobles had become impoverished and destitute. Says Shah Hatim (1699-1791) with bitterness:

جن کے ہاتھی سواری کو سیوا ب ننگے پاؤں
پھرے ہیں جوتے کو محتاج پڑے سرگرداں
نعتیں جن کو میسر تھیں ہمیشہ ہر وقت
روز پھرتے ہیں یہاں قوت کو اپنے حیراں
جن کے پوشاک سے معمور تھے توشے خانے
سو وہ پیوند کو پھرتے ہیں ترستے عریاں

Those who once rode on elephants now go barefoot
And for want of shoes wander about disconsolately

Those who once had all goods things of life
Now wander about in sheer bewilderment

Those whose wardrobes were once full of fine clothes
Wander about naked unable to lay hand even on rags.

The place of the nobles had been taken by the low born; the entire social order had turned upside down:

رذالے آج نشے بیچ زر کے ماتے ہیں
پہن لباس زری، سب کو سچ دکھاتے ہیں
مسی پہ پان کو کھا، سرخرو کہاتے ہیں
کبھی ستار، کبھی ڈھولکی بجاتے ہیں

غزور و غفلت و جو بن کے مدھ میں ہیں سرشار

Today the low born are full of money
Wearing clothes of gold they display themselves
Reddening their lips they show how great they are
Playing *sitar*, playing *dholak*, they go about
Arrogance, indifference, and youth has intoxicated them.

وے جو ٹھنڈے کو ترستے تھے سو اس دور میں آج
ہوئے ہیں صاحب مال و محل و فیمل و فشاں
رتبہ شیروں کا ہوا ہے گاشفالوں کو نصیب
جائے بلبلی ہیں چمن بیچ غزل خواں غزال

Those who once thirsted for simple water
Are now masters of palaces, elephants, and banners.

Jackals have usurped the status of lions
Crows warble in the garden where nightingales sang

The voice of the poet cries:

حاتم اب وقت ہے رجالوں کا
خوار و خستہ پھرے ہیں جگ میں نجیب

O Hatim, this age favours the rascal and the mean
The noble and the honest have fallen on bad days.

To the poets traditional customs were in disorder, the values topsy-turvy. Nobles had given up their generosity and magnanimity. They had no word of consolation for anybody. Nobody was there to share one's grief. All graces and courtesies seemed to have departed. There was no one who looked at another's eye. Great changes had come about in the world; the poets were overwhelmed with grief:

بس اب نموش ہو سودا کہ آگے تاب نہیں
وہ دل نہیں کہ اس غم سے جو کباب نہیں
کسی کی چشم نہ ہوگی کہ وہ پُر آب نہیں
سوائے اس کے تری بات کا جواب نہیں

کہ یہ زمانہ ہے بے طرح کا، زیادہ نہ بول

But Sauda, be still, your strength fails you
Whose heart is not aflame with grief
Whose eyes are not brimming with tears
There is nothing to be said except this:
We are living in a special kind of age
So say no more.

But there is the other face of this denouement, and the very moving poetry of Mir and Sauda, itself, it will be seen, mirrors that face.

Even as an intense dynamism and vitality came to inhabit the lives of the city's citizens, it displayed a growing emphasis on sensuousness, sensuousness which was all encompassing. It enclosed the socio-religious life, the art forms, and it encompassed the elite and those below. The mutation, at one level, manifested

a receding hold — and the sense of liberation in that — of the controls of a high aristocratic social life, classicized Persian culture, and puritanical Islam. At another level, it expressed an assertion of indigenous socio-cultural forms which imbued with popular and folkloric Hinduism are more reflective of sensuousness. This suggests that society of Shahjahanabad in the eighteenth century had become a melting pot where if there was much that percolated from the court downwards where the lesser mortals sought to emulate the culture of those they had held in awe so long, many cultural traditions of the lower levels too travelled upwards. There was much lateral transfusion, and absorbing the culture of their subjects, the long drawn process of the Indianization of the Mughals seems to have intensified.

It is well-established that the social life of the century's rulers and nobles was marked by an intensification of the sentiments of pleasure and enjoyment. A current of revelry and merry-making infused it, what with feasts and festivities going on all the time. A spirit of epicurean thrill ran through it. The life was a pageant of music and dance. A sexual licentiousness pervaded it, and women were at the heart of its many happenings. An environment imbued it that was excitable, bubbly, and ecstatic.¹ The dairy of Dargah Quli Khan, which has been widely used below, offers a visual representation of these sentiments. Its hyperboles and adjectives could not better highlighting the life of the time have, therefore, been followed.

-
1. The social life of the period is underlined in the conventional history writings where it is interpreted as decadence and projected as the chief factor behind the decline of the Mughal empire. For information on the writings see above Intro., nos. 5 and 6; also Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*; Goetz, *Crisis of Indian Civilization*; Malik, 'Some Aspects of Mughal Culture', pp.17, 37, 41-2.

The life, as captured in the dairy, was characterized by convivial assemblies (*mehfils*) which are seen to have proliferated all over the city. The dwellings, especially of its nobles, seemed to have turned the holding of *mehfils* as their *raison d'être*. Sadiq Quli Khan, alias Miran, organized them as a matter of daily life. Proverbially glittering, spectacle and entertainment was provided free of cost at them. Shamianas were fixed, colourful carpets spread, and the city's people invited. The highest amongst the nobility were present. Most sought after beauties gathered in large numbers. Dancers, even though uninvited, began collecting from the morning. *Naqqals* and *qawwals* (sufi devotional singers) entertained the people, while beautiful lads and lasses exhibited themselves without a trace of shyness. The illumination of lamps and candles was spectacular. Hospitality was offered lavishly and fruits, wine, and perfumes flowed. These *mehfils* were occasions for making contacts and friends in high places.²

All the energies of Latif Khan were devoted to providing *mehfils* of entertainment and his company became an anchor for the pleasure-seekers. His *mehfils*, also a daily affair, were so popular that every noble was eager to join in the revelries. They started from the second half of the day and carried on till the first part of night. Describing them, the noble quoted the verse:

در حریم بزم مستان دور صبح و شام نیست
گردش جام است اینجا گردش ایام نیست

In the *mehfil* of wine-bibbers there is no morning and night
It is the cup and not Time that goes around in circles.³

Sexuality was the life of the *mehfils* of Mirza Munnu and had specific connotation — it meant only pederasty. They were occasions where the beauty and other

2-5. Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa*, pp.142-3, 138-9, 137-8.

attributes of young lads were assessed, and those who did not go through this process of selection were considered worthless, howsoever good-looking they might be.⁴ The *mehfils* of Azam Khan, another famous pederast, were similarly illuminated. Most of the income from his *jagirs* was spent on the expenses of these lads who were procured from all parts of the country.⁵

A characteristic feature of the convivial assemblies were the courtesans or the *tawaiifs* (singing and dancing girls) as they were known then. In the eighteenth century they are seen to have acquired a new-found popularity and were at the centre-stage of the cultural life of the times. Quite apart from becoming a focus of the sexual energies floating around, their centrality has another explanation. Traditional bearers of culture in 'Hindu' India, in the popularity of these women was implied an indigenous cultural resurgence in context of its growing socio-economic dominance, and a declining capacity of the Mughals and their nobles to sponsor the art activities. In the hands of the courtesans the Mughal fine arts, specifically music, were given a new lease of life which made it survive through the eighteenth and down the nineteenth century. Like those of yore, these too inspired artists, musicians, poets — a large majority of whom were Muslims — and formed a dominant theme in their repertoire. Like them, these acquired power, wealth, and privileges. Images centred on the following underscore the demand they held in the society of Shahjahanabad.⁶

6. The material on the courtesans or the singing and dancing girls has been drawn from Peter Manuel, *Thumri in Historical and Stylistic Perspectives*, Delhi, 1989, pp.45-50, 57-8; interview of Pran Nevile, author of *The Nautch Girls of India*, with Narendra Panjwani, published in 'The Sunday Review', *Times of India*, June 8, 1997, p.6; Bearce, 'Intellectual and Cultural Characteristics', p.5; Madhu Trivedi, 'An Appraisal of the Musical Arts at Shahjahanabad During the First Half of the Eighteenth Century', in Qaisar and Verma, eds., *Art and Culture*, p.96.

Nur Bai was a leading courtesan of Delhi. She lived in a grand *haveli* which was decorated as of a high noble's. The pageantry which attended her when she moved out was also like that of a high noble's. The pleasure of her company could be had only if one possessed immense riches. Inviters had to send a large sum of money before she accepted their invitation. When she arrived she had to be showered with jewels, when she departed she had to be similarly bestowed. Even the nobles made request to visit her residence and few gained admittance. Whosoever became enamoured of her got 'sucked into a whirlpool of her demands and brought ruination upon himself'. Her attendants were called by her *begams* and *khanums*.⁷ It is said that Nadir Shah was so besotted by her that, but for her ingenuous escape, he would have taken her to Persia.⁸

Behnai Feel Sawar was a well-known dancer and head of other dancing girls. She had mace-bearers as servants. Her relationship with the nobles was on equal footing and they honoured the letters of introduction she wrote for others. Itmad al-Daula, the *wazir*, once bought her a gift worth seventy thousand rupees.⁹ Khusali Ram Jani, in the service of the same *wazir*, was so independent minded and aloof that once dancing in a *mehfil* of high nobles she, lost in her performance, neither spared a glance or a word for anyone.¹⁰ Zeenat was in such demand that she received more invitations than could possibly cope with. Her innumerable engagements left her hard pressed for time.¹¹ The secret of the immense popularity of Ad Begam lay in her practice of wearing no *pyjamas* (trousers) but decorating her legs with beautiful *naqqashi* (painting) which gave the impression of wearing one. In this state of dress/undress she attended the *mehfils* of nobles and was

7. Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa*, pp.176-7.

8. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, 2, p.371.

9-15. Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa*, pp.178-9, 179, 180-1, 178, 176, 179-80, 184.

greatly appreciated for her originality.¹² Saras Roop's company was inaccessible to all but those who had been granted prior permission and had showered her with appropriate gifts.¹³ Chak-Mak Dahni, when young, was the centre of attraction, including Muhammad Shah's, who had bestowed upon her the title 'Chak-Mak', glittering. Those desirous showered gold coins at her feet and made special requests before she acquiesced to spend a night. Though aged, her company could not be enjoyed without gifts, and her intimacy was difficult without lavishing adulations.¹⁴ Panna was the favourite of the Emperor who was all appreciation for the magic of her voice and the perfect proportions of her body.¹⁵

Were not the powerful Lal Kunwar and Udham Bai (later Qudsiya Begam) erstwhile dancing girls? In the same breath as Dargah Quli Khan emphasizes the sexual popularity of these women, he highlights their arts and accomplishments. If he talks of their ribaldry with much indulgence, then he writes about their talents with tremendous appreciation. Thus the Deccani evokes the respectable stature they enjoyed in 'Hindu' India. The ambiguous position they enjoyed in Shahjahanabad is expressed in the layout of the city where, though they dwelled in separate quarters and were therefore excluded from the mainstream society, the location of these at the city's centre reflects their inclusion in it.¹⁶

Sexual energies of the inhabitants of Shahjahanabad also crystallized around the popular entertainers and street artists who embellished the *mehfils*.¹⁷ Even as their arts were eagerly consumed by the people, pederasty — as the afore

16. See above Ch.1, Part II, p.54.

17. Their popularity during the century has been mentioned by Bearce, 'Intellectual and Cultural Characteristics', p.5.

mentioned cases of Mirza Munnu and Azam Khan suggest — seems to have been indulged in with an unabashed freedom.¹⁸ Like the courtesans', their popularity fetched them power and wealth. Some vignettes may be offered.

Taqi, a eunuch and ring-leader of mimics, was a favourite with the Emperor and had access even to his private apartments. The nobles were always courteous to him and keen to be invited to his *mehfils*. Pederasts and winsome lads could be seen gathered in his house. It was an abode of beauties, catamites, eunuchs and 'effeminates' who were proud to be known as his disciples (in sexual matters).¹⁹ Shah Danyal, alias Surkhi, was much sought after because of his command over mimicry, delightful wit, and mastery over music. This was inspite of his many uncouth ways in which he ate and slept.²⁰ Sultana was a twelve year old catamite, beautiful, dancer and mimic, and an amateur musician. He so enchanted the audiences that they always desired his repeat performance. A *mehfil* which he had once embellished became so memorable that when the desires of those present were rekindled they sighed at its vision.²¹ Mian Hinga held a *mehfil* in the *chawk* outside the palace-fortress. His show was watched by unaccountable groups of wealthy people, troops, and others. Many renowned people, under the pretence of making purchases, went to see it. His shows compelled the audiences to spend the money in their pocket and they returned home much poorer. He was the 'cause of many a ruined home.' His displays carried on till sunset. In spite of many invitations he never visited anyone, rather, his fans had to visit his house.²² Bari Naqqal's mimicry was out of the world. Whosoever found himself close to him (?)

18. Love for young boys was by no means uncommon in the Mughal society. References to it by Dargah Quli Khan are remarkably free of any value judgement; also Chandra, 'Cultural and Political Role of Delhi', p.212.

19-27. Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa*, pp. 169, 169-70, 175-6, 174-5. 171-2, 174, 170, 170-1, 146.

was bewitched and wished to spend his whole life in his embrace.²³ Alla Bandi, alias Razi, a singer and catamite, had an attractive body. Looking particularly beautiful when dressed up at night, he was much sought after and became a favourite of many.²⁴ Khwasi and Anutha were well-known *naqqals* of Delhi who also had a talent for singing and dancing. They were employed at the imperial court. The fun of *mehfils* greatly increased when they were present.²⁵ Sabza and Meza were two novices of their group. The mannerisms and gestures of these lads exhilarated those present and some desired to retain them forever.²⁶

The revelry and ribaldry, the indulgences and licentiousness of the *mehfils* expressed itself in the morphology of the city. A colony called, Kusalpura, populated with dancers and prostitutes was established by a wealthy and pompous mansabdar, Kusal Singh. If the colony carried his name, Kusal, it also carried the word's meaning — 'accomplished'. Song and dance were in progress in every house. The women decked themselves in fineries and positioned themselves strategically. Pimps negotiated their services with clients, while 'lascivious' men walked into any house. An atmosphere of what in the nineteenth century and later came to be imaged as 'debauchery' and 'lust' prevailed and people gathered in the evenings and indulged themselves. Criminals, drug addicts, and pedlars received shelter in this colony. In spite of so much going on, the *muhatsib* never dared to intervene.²⁷

Evidently the sentiments of sensuousness in the city became hegemonic. It must be mentioned, that, nowhere in his account does Dargah Quli Khan talk of the legendary 'devastation' caused to Delhi or its citizens by the invasion of Nadir Shah (1738-39) which he was a witness to; the city seems to have taken it in its

stride.²⁸

Images from the *Muraqqa-i Dehli* can be supplemented from other sources.

Visiting the city, the poet, Wali Deccani (1667-1744) was smitten and urged:

دل و آلی کا لے لیا دلی نے چھین
جا کہو کوئی محمد شاہ سوں

Will someone go and tell Muhammad Shah
Delhi has captured the heart of Wali

Evoking its sensuousness and ecstasy during the Emperor's reign, Shah Hatim could compose:

یکایک شوق میں بول اٹھا جی
کہ کہئے اولاً تعریفِ دہلی
نہیں ہے شہرِ دہلی ہے گلستاں
چمن سے جس کا خوشتر ہے بیاباں
جدھر دیکھو تدھر ہر کوچہ و بازار
ہوا ہے گل رُخاں سے صحنِ گلزار
ہراک کی چشمِ قاتلِ مست و خونخوار
ہراک کے ابرواں باڑھیل تر دار
وہ بے شک وقت کا شاہِ جہاں ہے
جو کوئی متوطنِ ہندوستان ہے

28. In my own reading of the *Muraqqa-i Dehli's* Urdu tr. and its collation with the original Persian I did not come across the following statement made in its Eng. version: 'In spite of the instability (caused by Nadir Shah's invasion) the spirit of revelry is extant (and continuous) till pre-down darkness,' p.77.

I had a sudden impulse to say something in praise of Delhi
 Delhi is not a city but a garden
 Even its desert is more pleasing than an orchard
 At every step are rose-faced maidens
 They have made the streets and bazaars a rose-garden of intoxicating
 eyes and sword-like brows.
 Anyone living in Hindustan in this age is undoubtedly the Shahjahan
 of his time.

Much earlier, during the reign of Jahandar Shah (1712-13), a contemporary had said:

‘Everybody high and low immersed themselves in a life of ease and pleasure, and music both vocal and instrumental reached such heights that in all quarters of the city, except the sounds of music and lusty shoutings no other sound was to be heard... . All things forbidden by the *sharia* were completely forgotten by the Shah and soldiers alike, and from *faqir* to *wazir* everyone became immersed in things forbidden, and became heedless of everything except pleasure.’²⁹

That the queens of Jahandar Shah and Muhammad Shah were former singing and dancing girls is not unimportant. In the reign of the former emperor musicians held some of the most important positions in the empire. Commenting on the ‘degeneration’ amongst the sons of nobility, Khafi Khan writes in *Muntakhab al-Lubab*: “Their greatest accomplishments are singing, playing on the *tambura*, comprehending *dharpat*, *khabbit*, *khafi*, and *doharah*.”³⁰ The civil wars and invasions, the anarchy and dislocation following Muhammad Shah’s reign notwithstanding, the *wazir*, Safdar Jang’s, garden-parties were going strong.³¹

29. Quoted by Satish Chandra in ‘Cultural and Political Role of Delhi’, pp.211-2.

30. Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-Lubab*, ed. Maulavi Kabir al-Din Ahmad, 3 vols., Calcutta, 1869-1925, 1, p.739.

31. Goetz, *Crisis of Indian Civilisation*, p.10.

And as late as the 1780's, Shah Nawaz Khan could write in *Ma'asir al-Umara* that music and convivial assemblies were a common feature of the life of the citizens of Shahjahanabad.³²

The environment imbuing the city manifested in the attire and make-up of its men which displays a gaiety, an ornate splendour, and a 'femininity' even by the standards of the times.³³ Farrukh Siyar never appeared in public except in the most colourful garments and loved gold embroidered dresses.³⁴ He desired his nobles to be similarly clad. When one of them came in white he remarked that if there was some occasion for mourning in his house he should have stayed back. Another noble mocked: perhaps he had not received money from his *jagir*.³⁵ Muhammad Shah actually wore women's garments and shoes³⁶ and is said to have behaved like them.³⁷ His noble, Amir Khan, also attired in women's clothes while the latter's companions applied lamp-black (*haajal*) on their eyelids, henna on their hands and feet, wore finger-rings, silver bracelets, and ear-rings.³⁸ Raushan al-Daula Zafar Khan, another noble, used gold with gay abandon. It is said that after his retinue had passed through the streets the poor swept up the dust in order to recover the gold dust that had fallen from his attire.³⁹ And the son of a court favourite, Abdul-Ghaffur, would dress as a 'loose' woman, dye his hands and feet

32. Shah Nawaz Khan, *Ma'asir-al Umara*, 2-1, p.273.

33. It was usual for medieval emperors to wear bright colours, jewels, ornaments, long hair, etc., something which modern society interprets as 'feminine'. Ansari, *Social Life of the Mughal Emperors*, pp.6-14.

34. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, 1, p.397

35. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, p.363.

36. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, p.363.

37. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, 2, see p.131.

38. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, p.366.

39. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, 2, p.267.

with henna, and wear many gold ornaments.⁴⁰ This contrasted strikingly with the restraint exercised hitherto, particularly during the reign of Aurangzeb. The Emperor had reserved white for the imperial family and, following them, the colour had become usual in court audiences.⁴¹ The puritan emperor once rebuked his son, Muazzam, for gaudiness when he appeared in court wearing a yellow turban and silken robe.⁴²

It seems that the colourfulness or sensuousness of the later-Mughals was an expression of a sense of freedom from the austerities of a state which was overly 'masculine'.

Sensuousness mutated the entire mood of the city which had become light and frivolous even as an absence of regal restraints provoked the emperor's to let go off themselves completely. The name of Jahandar Shah is associated with some particularly fascinating incidents. The Emperor and his consort, Lal Kunwar, often visited the markets seated in a bullock-cart, splurging on things as took their fancy.⁴³ On one occasion, after a day spent in merry-making and enjoying the various gardens of the city, they entered the house of a spirit-seller who was a friend of the queen. Here they drank, the driver of the cart sharing in the carouse, until completely intoxicated, and journeying back to the palace-fortress fell asleep. Upon reaching it, Lal Kunwar was carried to her apartments by her attendants, but the Emperor was forgotten behind in the cart and left in the stables, the driver dead drunk to know of anything. Next morning the absence of the Emperor was noticed and an alarm raised. A search was launched and verily enough he was

40. Ibid., p.269.

41. Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, p.227.

42. Jamshid H. Bilimoria, tr., *Letters of Aurangzeb*, Bombay, n.d., p.9, in Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, p.227.

43-45. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, 1, pp.195, 195-6, 196.

discovered in the cart, asleep, some two miles away from the palace-fortress.⁴⁴ Once, visiting the *dargah* of Shaikh Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, Jahandar Shah indulged himself in an amazing way. Near the *dargah* was an eminence ending in a rock with smooth, slippery surface, sloping down to the plane. On its inviting top the street boys of Delhi amused themselves by rolling over it. Seeing them the Emperor did the same when he was more than fifty years of age.⁴⁵

Even as Muhammad Shah drew thrills from animal-fights by 'three pairs of bears, a goat, a ram, and a wild boar, which were wrapped in tiger skins and trained to attack an elephant'⁴⁶ and the nobles jested with him,⁴⁷ the latter delighted in stories as that of Hamza the Arab who fought in seventy-two battles though he had become a martyr in the first.⁴⁸ Whenever any political calamity befell the empire Qamar al-Din Khan, the *wazir*, would gaze at the lotuses in some pool of the city's suburbs, or dwell in the pleasures of hunting and fishing⁴⁹; the reality of the empire's decline so irreversible that his presence or absence may have made little difference. At a time when Ghulam Qadir was holding Shah Alam hostage and ransacking the imperial palace, Bidar Bakht, the Emperor's son, — whom the Afghan intended to seat on the throne — went to the city's bazaar to fly a kite.⁵⁰ A sense of resignation to imperial powerlessness seems to be evident.

The lack of controls manifested itself in the language which a poet of the century, Trilok Das, puts in the mouth of Muhammad Shah in a poem he composed on the invasion of Nadir Shah. Caricaturing the austerity of his able noble Nizam al-Mulk, governor of Deccan, the Emperor says:

46. Sarkar, *The Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 1, p.4.

47. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, 2, p.132.

48. *Ibid.*, 263.

49. Sarkar, *The Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 1, p.6.

50. Spear, *Twilight of the Mughals*, p.28.

"Look you, how with a monkey's gait he comes,
 adorned with a nice, pretty-coloured green turban."
 "Seeing his strange gait, they (the Emperor and his cronies) burst into
 hoarse laughter.
 His shoes sounded nicely "thump, thump".
 The king declared, "Many come, but no one's walk has so delighted me.
 "A great noble, he looks like a black monkey;
 on seeing him my heart o'erflows with joy.
 "He is noble and great, he looks like a black
 monkey; to see him is a pleasure, know this is my delight.
 "No other noble is so lovely, he goes tinkle-tinkle,
 his gait is a joy to behold.
 "See, clever one, the shining of the lamp-black on his
 eyes, he sounds like drum-beating, how he jingles as he goes,
 "Such is this noble, named Nizam al-Mulk, he
 who is called the greatest of all the nobles."⁵¹

Sensuousness changed the religious sensibilities of the period and manifested itself in the popular places of worship, for, these by their very origins are reflective of it. Relics, *dargahs*, and *khanqahs* of the city, as the *Muraqqa-i Dehli* reflects, were active and, in the spirit of the times, are found bubbling with pious energies.⁵² Every now and then, the *Dilliwalahs* — nobles and lay alike — are seen to visit them and make pilgrimage or pay homage. They light a candle, tie a thread, or circumambulate, and supplicate. The sick and ailing came and, desirous of a cure, bathed in the springs around. On holy days pilgrims flocked in large numbers and on the celebration of *urs* thronged them.

Describing the devotion at the famed 'Qadam Sharif', the relic of the Prophet's footprint, Dargah Quli Khan writes:

-
51. Trilok Das, 'Nadir Shah and Muhammad Shah', Hindi poem tr. by William Irvine, in *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1897, p.48.
 52. Also Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, pp.351-2, 374; Malik, 'Some Aspects of Mughal Culture', pp.24-5.

'Every Thursday, the courtyard of the *dargah* is replete with visitors and it is difficult to approach the place of circumambulation and touch it. In the month of Rabi'ul-Awwal (the month of Prophet's birth) such crowds may be seen day and night. Pilgrims and ascetics come from far and near and seek the fulfillment of their desires. The water washing the relic is regarded like *sherbat* and is taken by them for those who cannot visit the place. Many wealthy people, considering it an act of great merit to be buried here, purchase land at high prices in the surroundings for their graves. The poor also have innumerable graves. The abundance of groups on the occasion of *urs* covers the floors and walls of this place and there is no room to sit. Thus people try to reach it from morning by surpassing others...⁵³

At the 'Qadamgah-i Hazrat Imam Amir al-Mu'minin Ali', which preserved the footprint of Ali, large numbers of pilgrims proceeded on Saturday 'with the desire for felicity in their hearts' and offered obeisance. On *Muharram*, which was the day of pilgrimage, 'the conveyances of nobles and plebians crowd the place narrowing it as the eye of an ant.'⁵⁴ To the *dargah* of Shaikh Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki devotees came everyday. On Thursday the place became exceptionally crowded and, those who could afford it, started from Delhi at night. On the occasion of his *urs* large numbers of pilgrims assembled. The *qawwals* chanted continuously around the *shaikh's* grave.⁵⁵ At the *dargah* of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya pilgrimage was performed every Wednesday. On the last Wednesday of the month of Safar an extraordinary large gathering came. Describing the celebration of the saint's *urs*, Dargah Quli Khan says:

'The *urs-i mubarak* is held on the fourteenth day of the month of Rabi'us-Sani and the people kiss the threshold... . Shortage of space is created by the excess of tents in the surroundings. The *qawwals* recite devotional songs turn by turn all night long... . This eminent group and the pilgrims stay awake the entire night. Around the

53-72. Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa*, pp.115-6, 116-7, 117-8, 118-9, 120, 120-1, 121, 122, 122, 134-5, 119, 135, 123-4, 124-5, 146-7, 130, 132-3, 133-4, 129-30, 136, 135-6, 136-7.

illuminated grave some recite Quran Sharif while others contemplate. A feeling of bounty is experienced at dawn and the *namaz-i fajr* (Dawn prayer) is performed in a sweet manner.⁵⁶

Pilgrimage at the *dargah* of Shaikh Nasir al-Din *Chirag-i Dehli* was performed on Sunday and particularly on the last Sunday of the month of *Diwali* when large crowds gathered. Caravans of pilgrims arrived from dawn to sunset, raised pavilions and tents for themselves, and bathed in the springs that were in the environs.⁵⁷

These shrines and relics were, however, Shahjahanabad's celebrated centres. There were the graves belonging to lesser mystics which were also exuberant with piety, as that of Shaikh Shah Turkman Biyabani (d.1340)⁵⁸, Shaikh Baqi Billah (d.1603)⁵⁹, Shaikh Shah Hasan Rasul Numa (d.1696)⁶⁰, one Shah Bayazid Allah Huh⁶¹, and one Shah Azizullah⁶². Then they were the graves of more ordinary mortals — whose merit merely lay in resting in the environs of the celebrated shrines — which were regarded with devotional feelings of a kind that Dargah Quli Khan was inspired to capture them. These were of the poet Amir Khusrau⁶³, of the sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish (r. 1210-36)⁶⁴, of the emperor Bahadur Shah I⁶⁵, of the noble Mir Musharraf⁶⁶, and of some non-descript man, Nagal.⁶⁷

Piety, in other words, had become extravagant and displayed a light-heartedness, a fleetness, even a frivolity.

A similar sensuousness of devotional feelings and the patterns it assumed prevailed at the *khanqahs* of Shahjahanabad's mystics. Devotees flocked to those of Shah Ghulam Muhammad Dawal Pura and Mir Sayyid Muhammad who, like mystics of yore, were sincere and pious, courted poverty, and shunned political power.⁶⁸ Of them was one, Majnun Nanak Shah, who had become an institution in the lives of the city's citizens. Amongst the women devotees he had a special

appeal.⁶⁹ In the exuberance of piety devotees trooped to the *khanqahs* of Hafiz Shah Sadullah and Shah Ghulam Muhammad who, sincere and pious, were nonetheless of lesser lustre.⁷⁰ Pious frivolity, however, caused them to throng the *khanqahs* of even those mystics who possessed none of the sublime attributes. One such was Shah Kamal, whose popularity has been described by Dargah Quli Khan in the following words:

In the world of asceticism his was a colourful and princely personality. The dresses he wears are unparalleled for their refinement and his food evinced an equal sophistication. He is endowed with a proportionate body. These qualities endear him to everyone. He is ardently fond of *sama* (ecstasy) and with the use of sufi terminology and metaphors makes his speeches powerful and interesting. His presence often decorates the gatherings of the *urs* and the *majalis* (devotional assemblies). Seeing him reach a state of ecstasy punctuated with pauses and rests people are mesmerized. They are delighted with his eloquent couplets of Urdu and Persian and respond enthusiastically at their recitation. His command over Urdu poetry is akin to his name (Kamal i.e. perfection). In his company are to be found all those people who are very well versed in their field and from this atmosphere one derives a great sense of fulfillment.⁷¹

The worldliness — and mystical frivolity — of Shah Kamal is evident. Similarly there was Shah Rehmat Ullah who:

... is the leader of the *shaikhs* of the city and is popular all over the world. Many of the high personages are devoted to him and are often in attendance. His connections in the high places make the people seek him out. A gathering of *zikr* (a spiritual exercise) and a *majlis-i sama* (assembly of ecstasy) are usually found at his place. He has four wives and turn by turn spends one night with each one of them... . Although renowned for spiritual attainments his fondness for liquor continues. (He thinks) perhaps something good will come out of it... . (He) is the leader of his times and the chief spokesman at the *majlis*. His blessed presence is worth honouring and his feet are worthy of worship and reverence.⁷²

Playfulness of the devotees seems to have had a tendency to create newer objects of worship and resolve itself in them. Shah Kamal and Shah Rehmat Ullah became so popular because they could provide them with eloquent discourses, hold assemblies of spiritual exercise and of ecstasy, just as the *dargahs* and graves offered them ever-growing opportunities to celebrate *urs*, hold devotional and musical assemblies, circumambulate, light a candle, tie a thread and so forth. Thus piety of the eighteenth century had become external to a considerable degree. Many more mystics of the above type rose in popularity,⁷³ the citizens belief in miracles and superstitions expanded.⁷⁴ Shedding light upon it, Shah Waliullah remonstrated: 'People's worship of their living *shaikhs*, or of their shrines if they are dead, is one of the worst diseases of our times.'⁷⁵ There was a proliferation of religious sects⁷⁶; Muhammad Shah himself belonged to the sect of Sivanarayanis.⁷⁷ Significantly, the leaders of these sects came from the popular classes. Does this have anything to do with the rising prosperity of lower segments of society?

Piety's particular character must have mutated the environment of the devotional music assemblies which were being held all the time in the city: at its *dargahs*, relics, *khanqahs*, dwellings of the mystics and *qawwals*. Purported to excite ecstasy the emotional content of these assemblies, in the spirit of the times,

73. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, p.374.

74. Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, pp.126-30, 134-7; Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, pp.374-5; Malik, 'Some Aspects of Mughal Culture', pp.24-5.

75. Shah Waliullah, *Tafhimat-i Ilahiyya*, 2 vols., Dabhel, 1936, 2, p.63, in Troll, *Muslim Shrines*, p.193.

76. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, pp.349-50, Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, pp.118-20.

77. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, p.349.

must have exacerbated. Accounts of individual *qawwals* by Dargah Quli Khan show them to be intensely emotional. Jatta recited in a 'melancholic' voice and 'caused' the sufis to 'suffer' in ecstasy from unrequited love. Ecstasy was an 'inseparable' element of his singing.⁷⁸ Burhani organized a *mehfil* every week where the mystics 'gathered' to 'experience' a state of ecstasy.⁷⁹ Taj Khan arranged a *mehfil* every month where amongst those present were renowned mendicants and saints who 'regarded' ecstasy with 'reverence'. His verses moved the people to ecstasy and they showered him with more requests.⁸⁰ An urge for ecstasy hung in the assemblies. When, on the birthday of the Prophet, a *mehfil-i sama* was organized at the abode of the *mir-i atish* of Muhammad Shah:

'As soon as the *qawwals* found the audience receptive the singing started and the sufis were sent into a state of frantic ecstasy. On all sides there was an uproar created by the dancing and lamentations of these mystics. The entire audience was overpowered by the euphoric emotionalism and stood up to honour the ecstasies.'⁸¹

Ecstasy even acquired an air of artificiality. When, on *Basant*, a *majlis-i sama* was organized at the *dargah* of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya 'each sufi trie(d) to outdo the others in attaining the state of ecstasy'.⁸² None other than the opulent Raushan al-Daula Zafar Khan would hold a *majlis-i sama* at his place every week where in a state of ecstasy he tore his gilded clothes and distributed them amongst the singers.⁸³

Thus the character of the elegiac music assemblies held at the *ashur-khanas* (mourning houses) also appears before us as intensely melancholic. Meer Abdullah recited elegies in such a melancholic way that the 'laments and wails' of the mourners reached a 'high pitch'. Crowds gathered much before his

78-82. Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa*, pp.182-3, 165-6, 162-3, 141, 145.

83. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, p.362.

arrival.⁸⁴ Mir Lutf Ali Khan 'epitomized' melancholy and grief, and his verses were 'full of agony and affliction'.⁸⁵ As soon as Shaikh Sultan recited, the crowds gathered were 'grief stricken' and started 'wailing and lamenting'.⁸⁶ Mir Abu Tarab's style of recitation 'stunned' the audience into 'melancholic silence'.⁸⁷ The melancholic sounds of Mirza Ibrahim's elegies and his wailing tones brought tears to the eyes.⁸⁸ Mir Derwish Husain's recitations caused a 'cacophony' of grief.⁸⁹ Having heard Jani Hajjam once the listeners did not desire to hear him again as the sheer force of his recitations 'sapped their strength'.⁹⁰

A frantic immediacy pervaded the environment.

Thus piety in Shahjahanabad of the eighteenth century had to an extent become profane. That it was so is amplified from the marked use of devotional places and occasions for social and non-pious⁹¹ purposes which only emphasizes its growing sensuousness. At the *dargah* of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya, on the holy day of the last Wednesday of the month of Safar:

'The *Dilliwalahs* having dressed and adorned themselves come. After paying homage they go wandering in the gardens in the surroundings of the blessed mausoleum. Artisans arrange their wares and all kinds of delicious eatables and other requisites are made available for the visitors. The excess of melodies of the minstrels creates a cacophony of music. All around are ventriloquists and dancers who perform to the best of their ability.'⁹²

The *dargah* of Shaikh Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki was a very popular place of leisure and recreation with the inhabitants of the city.⁹³ At the *dargah* of Shaikh Nasir al-Din *Chirag-i Dehli*, every Sunday:

84-90. *Dargah Quli Khan, Muraqqa*, pp.157-8, 156-7, 158, 159, 159, 159, 159-60.

91. The use of devotional places and occasions for non-religious purposes has figured above in the discussion on the sexual space they provided to women.

92-98. *Dargah Quli Khan, Muraqqa*, pp.119, 117, 120, 134, 144, 123-4, 125, 146.

'Caravans of pilgrims arrive from dawn till sunset and in the shade of trees and walls sit on spreads and enjoy themselves. The place is a spectacle of musical assemblies of good cheer and from every corner sounds of *moor chang* and *pakhawaj* (Hindustani musical instruments) emanate.'⁹⁴

At the *Arab ki Serai*, on the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, the natives of the city, especially the pious and the devout, came. The organizers, however, pandering to the taste of the palate welcomed them with varieties of dates and served them plenty of tasty dishes at dinner. Large cups of *qahwa* (coffee) were offered. The believers found an atmosphere of both 'discourses and gaiety' while some people went to 'see the Arab lads' there.⁹⁵ The erotic had intruded the pious: the pious and the non-pious merged. The *urs* of Bahadur Shah I was an occasion to exhibit not only much splendour but also an opportunity for trysts and amorous indulgences:-

'In every nook and corner the lovers embrace their sweethearts and in every street and bazaar the pleasure-seekers dance after quenching the thirst of their lust. The passionate and the drunken, oblivious of the *muhtasib*, indulge themselves in pursuit of young boys. There is such a crowd of winsome lads and catamites that even the puritans attempted in ways which are sufficient to shake the very foundations of piety. As far as the eye can see there are beautiful faces and tangled tresses. All around prevails a world of sheer pleasure and debauchery... The whores and lads entice more and more people to this atmosphere of permissiveness. But, however, it is in one's welfare and prudence to ignore these activities.'⁹⁶

Similarly the *urs* of Mir Musharraff provided the nobles a pretext to bring their lovers and, setting up tents on the bank of the canal and under the shade of trees, amuse themselves with wine and liquor. At the height of the celebrations all hesitations were overcome and the people indulged in their desires and enjoyed themselves.⁹⁷ The grave of Nagal was a place of recreation and merry-making where a number of 'lascivious' women of Delhi, on the twenty-seventh of every

month, dressed in finery and in the guise of making pilgrimage, gathered with their lovers. It abounded with well-dressed bachelors who came in the hope that they might be chosen by one of the women's.⁹⁸

Clearly piety in Shahjahanabad of the eighteenth century had been considerably vulgarized. Qatil mentions that *shaikhs* and *khalifas* of the *dargahs*, under pretext of making them followers, used boys and girls for sexual purposes. On the occasion of *urs* they held them out for commercial transactions and converted the *dargah* into a 'pleasure-house'.⁹⁹ Shah Waliullah's (1702-62) repugnance of grave cult, and the 'abuses' stemming from it, only sheds light upon it. He comments: 'What people have devised in the matter of shrines, taking them as grounds where *melas* (Hindu socio-cultural fairs) are held, belongs to the worst heresies'.¹⁰⁰ The efforts of the city's well-known mystic, Shaikh Kalimullah (1650-1729), and his successors to restore the Chisti order to its old stature of sincerity, poverty, and sublimity was perhaps a desperate endeavour to arrest its growing vulgarization.¹⁰¹

The above analyses underscores that the power of Islam over the religious life of the city's citizens withered during the century. Thus rose Shah Waliullah and the mystics, Mazhar Jan-i Janan and Mir Dard, who tried to revive it by making it contemporary.¹⁰² This declining hold of classicized religion and the resurgence of popular beliefs and practices has been conventionally interpreted as symptomatic of moral laxity in the society.

99. Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, p.165.

100. Shah Waliullah, *Tafhimat-i Ilahiyya*, 2, p.64, in Troll, *Muslim Shrines*, p.195.

101. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, pp.390-3.

102. *Ibid.*, pp.374-90.

The newer sensibilities, expressing themselves in the cultural creativity of the city, made art forms sensuous and manifested much indigenous or popular and folkloric influences. Sensuousness was displayed in their vibrancy, dynamism, and fluidity which otherwise underscored an age surcharged with emotion and tension.

On the architecture a scintillating article, 'The Qudsiya *Bagh* at Delhi: Key to Late Mughal Architecture', by Hermann Goetz¹⁰³, really becomes a reference point. In the article Goetz has picked up 'Qudsiya *Bagh*' — the garden-complex built in mid-eighteenth century by Qudsiya Begam — as a case-study and identified features which if, to him, represent the genesis of late - Mughal architecture then, to us, display its growing sensuousness. Reducing most of the old worn-out architectural and ornamental forms to basic types, this architecture evolved combinations of the most diverse kinds. These ranged from the simplicity of a more or less numerous reduplication to the complexity of a complete fusion of older forms into new ones. The new forms were created by the introduction of a new naturalism, a transformation of most architectural forms into vegetal, especially flower motifs, which were of fundamentally Hindu character where the light flowers of Persia gave way to the 'succulent turgidity' of the lotus. The straight lines in the architecture, taken over by a dynamism, became curved and broken which also made flat forms rounded, and simple types, involved. The organization became similarly dynamic, 'a rhythm not only of alternating big and small forms, but also of a slow but well-defined intensification and relaxation of accent'. The Persian clarity of the Mughals gave way to the 'Hindu joy of irregular growth and involution', and the 'aesthetic accent' shifted from a 'quiet and static ideal' to an 'emotional and dynamic ideal'. The product displayed an exuberance which at first

103. Hermann Goetz, 'The Qudsiya *Bagh* at Delhi: Key to Late Mughal Architecture', *Islamic Culture*, Jan, 1952, pp.138, 143, 132.

created a rather heavy effect: a grand style, majestic, tragic, sometimes even pompous; as a further response, however, the individual forms were stretched and slimmed to the extreme and subordinated to the co-ordinating key motifs so that the eventual effect was of gay lightness: playful, musical, dancing, even frivolous as represented in the city's *havelis* and the provincial kingdoms:

‘...a fairy world of dream and ecstasy... a world of never ending flower-ornaments in stone, with no accentuated architectural lines, in an environment of sweet-coloured, sweet-scenting flowers, murmuring fountains and water-falls and sparkling tanks...’¹⁰⁴

But a change of style was a reflection of mutation in contents. Thus paintings saw a growing emphasis on themes of women, portrayed sensuously. Their sensuousness is created either through posturing of the body, especially the breasts [See Plates XII, XIII], or through the insertion of a bird (accomplice and secret sharer of the sweetheart, see Plate XIV), or flowers [See Plate XV¹⁰⁵], or a cup of wine, or a book of poetry etc., or a combination of several of these. Garden is also frequently used to suggest it. Then, one is struck by the growing unwrapping of human body, the female body, to public gaze. The nude female body is almost a new genre of painting in the Mughal miniature style and makes its forceful appearance in this century. The eroticism is, perhaps, best visible in the painting where no less than the person of emperor Muhammad Shah — the last in line of notable Mughal rulers — is shown in explicit dalliance. Could the artists of yore have had the temerity to paint any of the Great Mughals likewise? The freedom — clearly of an extreme degree — may be interpreted as symbolic of a reaction by the artists to court dictates which desiring paintings having political purposes had

104. Ibid., p.16.

105. I am thankful to Professor Harbans Mukhia for lending me his copies of Plates XII, XIII, XIV, XV.

severely limited their creative expression. Thus the style was no longer the formalized, static, and chaste Persian but one with a lot of movement and fluidity.

Goetz described it lyrically:

'Embodied sentiment, love, romance, music in an unreal atmosphere pregnant with never-heard excitements of the senses, of the soul-loving mistresses and swains, gods and goddesses of the musical modes, sentimental zanana girls and fairy-tales, the tragic story of Rupmati and Baz Bahadur, etc. in quiet gardens and unreal forests, at the golden set of the sun or at the light of torches and of the moon, full of sympathetic life of the tame or wild beasts and birds.'¹⁰⁶

The transformed sensibilities of the inhabitants reflected in the popularity of different music formats such as the *khayal* which challenged the supremacy exercised by chaste and puritanical formats as *dhrupad* over the music world of the city. Influenced by folkloric (or regional) traditions the *khayal* was adaptable to rhythmic variations, could be sung in a variety of tempo, and possessed much scope for decorative devices.¹⁰⁷ Its content displayed their sensuousness in a change of song-texts which became, mostly, on the love-lore of Krishna and the milkmaids, union with a lover, and separation from him.¹⁰⁸ The sentiment was expressed in female desire, constructed though in the male gaze. In other words *khayal* was sweet, light, and mobile and required no special knowledge of music to be enjoyed. The upcoming classes could relate with it — a fact which should have played no mean role in its growth. In contrast the elite *dhrupad*, though derived from folkloric traditions in many ways, had moved away and become abstract,

106. Goetz, *The Crisis of Indian Civilization*, p.17.

107. Trivedi, 'An Appraisal of the Musical Arts', pp.96-8; For the historical development and evolution of *khayal* see Najma Perveen Ahmad, *Hindustani Music: A Study of its Development in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Delhi, 1984, Ch.6.

108. Trivedi, 'An Appraisal of the Musical Arts', p.97; Manuel, *Thumri in Historical and Stylistic Perspectives*, pp.6-7.

austere, and structurally rigid. Its classical compositions, ponderous and static rendering, had made it esoteric and comprehensible only to the learned.¹⁰⁹ By mid-eighteenth century *khayal* had displaced the primacy enjoyed by *dhrupad* in music. The mutation that came in music threw into popularity other formats as the *khabbit*, *tarana*, *jangala*, and folk music forms based on the *dhun*.¹¹⁰ It had an impact on the devotional *qawwali* which came to be sung in the 'catchy' style of *khayal*¹¹¹ spelling an erosion of the sufistic influence over it and reflecting the receding influence of orthodox Islam. Women singers came to participate in them and its text, which was in Persian, saw an invasion of Hindi language.¹¹²

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, in the provinces, the growing sensuousness of music reached its apogee and the *thumri* emerged as its most evocative representative. More intimate and romantic in character than *khayal*, the *thumri* was in essence amatory and sung mostly by the courtesans before their clients.¹¹³ Its emphasis on emotional expression made a definitive structural basis unimportant and provided ever-growing opportunities to the exponent to innovate.¹¹⁴ The much heavier folkloric influence on it are reflected in the simplicity of its text, use of regional dialects like *Awadhi* and *Bhojpuri*, and most visibly, in the *holi* songs even as the themes were centred on Krishna, the cowherd

109. Trivedi, 'An Appraisal of the Musical Arts', pp.96-98; For the historical development and evolution of *dhrupad* see Najma Perveen, *Hindustani Music*, Ch.5.

110. Trivedi, 'An Appraisal of the Musical Arts', pp.95, 98.

111. Ibid., p.99; Najma Perveen, *Hindustani Music*, p.133.

112. Najma Perveen, *Hindustani Music*, p.133.

113. Manuel, *Thumri in Historical and Stylistic Perspectives*, pp.7, 12; Vidya Rao, 'Thumri as Feminine Voice', *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 28, 1990, p.31.

114. This characteristic of the *thumri* forms the theme of the above article by Rao; Manuel, *Thumri in Historical and Stylistic Perspectives*, pp.7, 30-1.

and pastrol god, and union and separation of lovers.¹¹⁵ Interestingly, *thumri* evolved as the 'other' of *khayal*, contesting its 'established, ordered, authoritative' voice, just as the *khayal*, challenging the rigid structure of *dhrupad*, had emerged as the 'other' of the elite format.¹¹⁶ The century, therefore, saw a progressive liberation of music — and of other art forms — from the hegemony of formats which exhausting themselves had become stultified, repetitive, and stylized. It is not hard to perceive that the declining hold of the empire, and its cultural formats, was generating experimentation with popular or folkloric art formats which were less hidebound, more energetic and reflective of sensuousness, than the puritanical insistence on chastity whether of the female body or of the body of the arts.

Sensuousness in poetry assumed a rather grand expression in the adoption of the bazaar language, Urdu, as a vehicle of literary expression which displaced the dominance of Persian, even at the court level. Musahafi, himself a poet of Persian, remarked:

'Due to the trend of the time, I now engage myself in composing poems in *rekhta* (Urdu) because the taste for Persian poetry as compared to Urdu has declined in India. Urdu language nowadays has attained the status of Persian, and is regarded better than that.'¹¹⁷

Efforts at refinement notwithstanding, the language reflected the exuberant culture of the streets while its vocabulary and idiom, through the century, continued to be moulded by the one spoken on them.¹¹⁸ Sensuousness of poetry was

115. Manuel, *Thumri in Historical and Stylistic Perspectives*, pp.7-8.

116. Rao, 'Thumri as Feminine Voice', p.33.

117. Ghulam Hamdani Musahafi, *Tazkira-i Hindi*, p.248, in Muhammad Umar, 'Literature of a Declining Empire — Urdu Poetry in the Eighteenth Century', mimeo, p.32.

118. Mukhia, 'The Celebration of Failure as Dissent', p.24.

displayed in the blossoming of the poetic genre of *ghazal* which,¹¹⁹ in the context of Islam's declining power, was even less concerned with problems of spiritualism or any form of religious philosophy than the Persian *ghazal* was.¹²⁰ Based upon love like the Persian *ghazal*, the sentiments of Urdu *ghazal*, however, were embedded in realism. Unlike the *thumri* the emotion was expressed in male desire where the beloved, placed on a pedestal, was idealized. If Mir Taqi Mir remains its most evocative representative, then Mir Hasan is identified with the simple love *masnavis* which flowered during the period. Sensuousness of Urdu poetry was reflected in the 'diabolic opposite' of these love verses — the satire (*hijwa*) of Mirza Sauda — where lampooning was the art. Lampooning was a genre of this poetry and, like the amatory sentiments of the *ghazal* and the *masnavi*, evolved in a folkloric milieu where the ruler and the priest were a target of marked ridicule.¹²¹ In Sauda's hands the sensuous *marsiya* composition flourished.¹²² Giving a new turn to the poetry of Shahjahanabad, the style in the provinces became 'sweet and spicy, glowing and musical'¹²³, but the sentiments had for some reason become hollow. Its sensuousness here assumed a rather overblown form, for, in the popularity of the *rekhti* genre of poetry poets entertained male audiences in verses written in women's language and on subjects from their world, representing them, particularly sexually, in an assumed and exaggerated form.¹²⁴

119. Material on the Urdu poetry, except mentioned otherwise, has been drawn from the texts, Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, Delhi, 1964; Russell and Islam, *Three Mughal Poets*; T.G. Bailey, *A History of Urdu Literature*, Delhi, 1979.

120. Mukhia, 'The Celebration of Failure as Dissent', p.23.

121. *Ibid.*, pp.23-6.

122. Umar, 'Literature of a Declining Empire', p.40.

123. Goetz, *The Crisis of Indian Civilization*, p.16.

124. C.M. Naim, 'Transvestic Words: The *Rekhti* in Urdu', mimeo.

The preoccupation with sensuousness found expression in somewhat unexpected quarters in Delhi in the eighteenth century. Khwaja Mir Asar, a practising Sufi saint, poet, younger and very devoted brother of Khawaja Mir Dard more renowned both as a Sufi as well as poet, wrote a *masnavi* in Urdu, *Khwab-o-Khayal*, (Of Dreams and Imaginations).¹²⁵ Even as the verses are immersed in sufic imagery and coded meanings, Asar holds forth on the description of the charms of the female body, *sarapa*, limb by limb, from head to foot, as the term implies. That *sarapa* had become common in the Urdu poetry of eighteenth century Delhi is an established fact for the historians of the language and its literature; its quiet incorporation in a sufic work merely reinforces its wide prevalence and acceptability in the strata of society where Urdu was fast emerging as the language of literary production, in the bazaars and the streets, but moving upwards. Indeed, having gone into the description of the female body bit by bit¹²⁶, and becoming considerably lurid in dwelling upon 'the navel and below the navel', the incongruity of it in a sufic work strikes the Khawaja. It is hard to locate any allegorical sufic meanings embedded in the description and he feels apologetic for having done what he has even as he tries rather unconvincingly to build some hidden sufic resonances in it.¹²⁷ But then he would rather feel apologetic than delete the offending part, which attests to the necessity of imparting a strong touch of sensuousness for the book to find acceptance in the target audience.

Growth of new art styles and formats represents that, far from decaying or declining, culture proliferated in eighteenth century Shahjahanabad. This manifested an invasion of a cross-section of society into art activities and their

125. Khwaja Syed Mir Asar, *Masnavi Khwab o Khayal*, ed. Maulavi Abdul Haq, Aurangabad, 1976.

126. Khwaja Syed Mir Asar, *Masnavi*, pp.81-95.

127. *Ibid.*, pp.6-7.

interpretation of them anew in context of times which were very energetic. The development was caused by two-fold happenings. Transfer of political and economic power to alternate social groups had led to the emergence of a new, predominantly indigenous or Hindu elite which however sought to emulate the ways of the imperial-courtier minority they were replacing. Enabled by their growing prosperity this upcoming class came to patronize the elite cultural activities which their erstwhile patrons were losing the capacity to economically support. Then, the declining power of the Mughal ruling class had an overall implication. By divesting them of social exclusivity their culture became accessible to one and all. These many and varied entrants into cultural activities establishing a dialogue between their own cultural moorings and the culture of those they were seeking to emulate, a proliferation of art styles and formats was brought about. Elite styles became less abstract, while popular formats became refined, and new ones were created. If in *khayal* and *thumri* is exhibited a confluence of elite and popular culture, then, in the conversion of Urdu, a bazaar language, into a literary vehicle is displayed an elevation of popular cultural forms to elite level, as Sauda put it — a piece of earthenware made into jewels and gems. If in the gay liveliness of *havelis* is exhibited a reduction of elite cultural forms from their abstract heights, then, in the sensuousness of paintings is expressed their fall from puritan realms.

Proliferation of culture is evidenced in other ways and is represented, before us, in the art form of poetry. There was an unprecedented growth of *mushairas* (poetical assemblies) which were being held all the time and in every corner of the city. The number of poets in it had grown several fold. While the first *tazkira* (biographical anthology of poets) in Urdu poetry, *Nikhat-us-Shaura*, compiled in 1751 by Mir Taqi Mir, contains notices of 102 poets in Delhi, in the

Tazkira-i Majmua-i Negh by Quadratullah Qasim, a poet and pupil of Mir Dard, the number of enlisted poets had increased to about 800.¹²⁸ Paintings flourished in quantity and variety as never before. The construction of a pretty *haveli* by each prosperous family meant a sea enrichment of architecture even if no grand monument was built, the Safdarjung tomb being a pale imitation of Humayun's tomb. There was a proliferation in the caste of musicians.¹²⁹ The city reverberated with music assemblies, just as it did with convivial and sufi devotional assemblies.

The new entrants to cultural activities drawn from the merchants, traders, bankers, service officials, and in general, from the lower sections of society, elite culture went through a tremendous popularization. Thus poetry no longer remained a pursuit of the nobles (*pesha-i sharif*). The social composition of the poets the city produced changed and became more popular.¹³⁰ Even as nobles continued to compose verses and Mir came from the family of a modest mystic and Sauda from a merchant's, Muhammad Aman Nisar was a musician, Husain Vakhshi, a cloth merchant, Madan Singh Shaguftah, a goldsmith, Shambu Nath Aziz, a banker, and Mir Sadiq Ali Sadiq, a broker.¹³¹ Elite architectural styles became popularized in the *havelis*. To the *mushairas* came people from all segments of society and, as the *Muraqqa-i Dehli* shows, musical assemblies were all pervasive.

Popularization subjected culture to rather fascinating turmoils. Quite apart from divesting the Mughal art of elegance, sublimity, and grandeur it had the

128. Umar, 'Literature of a Declining Empire', pp.32-3.

129. For instance the *Dom*, *Dhari*, *Dhadi* and *Tawaiyf*. Trivedi, 'An Appraisal of the Musical Arts', p.96.

130. Umar has provided an extensive table — running into four pages — on the social background of the poets of the city. *Ibid.*, pp.33-6.

131. Chandra, 'Cultural and Political Role of Delhi', p.215.

potential to make architecture look extremely tawdry and ornate, to bring into music some loss of sophistication, to vulgarize poetry immensely. More than any other art form it is poetry which articulates the cultural depreciation before us.

Quadratullah Qasim lamented:

'This noble profession has lost its importance as the incompetent (illiterate) persons have begun to compose verses... the sharp rise in number of poets has devalued this art... whenever I see, I see a poet, to which direction I open my ears, I hear the couplet being recited... everyone of them makes tall claims of being a poet laureate...'¹³²

The poets, especially Mir, bemoaned:

نکتہ پردازى سے اجلافوں کو کیا
شعر سے بزازوں نڈافوں کو کیا

What have the low-born to do with fine points of literature
What has poetry to do with cloth merchants and cotton cleaners.

کیا قدر تھی سخن کی جب یاں بھی صحتیں تھیں
ہر بات جائزہ ہے ہر بیت پر صلے ہیں

Time was when connoisseurs graced symposiums
Applauding each verse and thought expressed.

On the other hand, by introducing sensuousness into art forms, popularization subverted the classicized culture of the Mughals and gave architecture its exquisite *havelis*, Urdu poetry its golden age, painting its enchanting images of flower-like maidens, and music, formats like the *khayal* and *thumri* which were, altogether, more intimate and emotional in expression. It gave the society of Delhi — other than the courtly people — for the first time a truly urbane culture.

132. Mir Quadratullah Qasim, *Majmua-i Neghz*, ed. Mahmud Sherwani, 2 vols., Lahore, 1943, 1, p.16, in Umar, 'Literature of a Declining Empire', p.37.

The above analyses emphasizes much percolation of elite culture to classes below during the century. However it also underscores a reverse pattern: an absorption of many folkloric or popular cultural forms and elements by classes above. Urdu, a bazaar language, born in the Mughal camp (*urdu*), spoken amongst its soldiers, horsemen, shopkeepers, artisans and servants was adopted by it as a medium of literary expression in place of the classic Persian. Thus a language with lowest of low origins had travelled upwards and reached the highest level of the emperors themselves. Shah Alam II, Akbar Shah II, and Bahadur Shah II were poets and composed their verses in it. In his compositions, the last of them, even expressed his pain at the downfall of a great empire, of his illustrious house, and of himself as an emperor.

Music formats imbued with popular or folkloric influences had been assimilated by the emperors. Muhammad Shah composed a number of *khayals* under the pen name of 'Rangila Piya' and is supposed to have written some *thumris*.¹³³ In distant Awadh, late in the century, Wajid Ali Shah — the nawab — composed many *thumris* as 'Akhtar Piya'.¹³⁴ The emperors, particularly Muhammad Shah, are found to regale with gay abandon in the street arts of the times. This was quite a contrast to the stealthy pleasure Dara Shukoh is seen to draw in a painting from a game of acrobats - silently, in profile, from behind the window [See Plates XVI, XVII]. Then, the local wedding and carnival songs called *sethian* assimilated at the highest of high level, Shah Alam II himself composed a whole volume *Nadrat-i Shahi* on them which displays how much at home he was in local dialects.

133. Trivedi, 'An Appraisal of the Musical Arts', p.97; Manuel, *Thumri in Historical and Stylistic Perspectives*, p.36.

134. Manuel, *Thumri in Historical and Stylistic Perspectives*, p.66; Rao, 'Thumri as Feminine Voice', p.31.

From the early part of this review it can be observed that worship of the *dargahs* was popular with the nobility of the city. A form of worship which had popular origins is thus found integrated in the religious life of the higher echelons of society. With the worship were assimilated folkloric practices such as circumambulation of the grave, tying of thread on the screen to have a desire fulfilled, gift of money on the occasion of *urs*, offering of flowers and scents, lighting of lamps.

It can but be emphasized that worship of *dargahs* was a familiar feature of Mughal imperial life since the days of Babur, what with the Emperor offering homage to the *dargah* of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya after his victory over Hindustan.¹³⁵ The *dargah* of Shaikh Muin al-Din Chisti at Ajmer, in fact, had been receiving such patronage from them that the mystic can be said to have become a patron saint of the imperial family. In the circumstances of the eighteenth century, when the power of Islam receded, and controls of various kinds evaporated from their lives, the worship of *dargahs* effloresced amongst the Mughals and assumed an expression which reveals not only the roots popular beliefs had struck in their religious life but the potential they had beneath the pervasive influence of classical religion. As compared to their predecessors, the later Mughals patronized them in ways which are altogether intimate and encompassing.

The *dargah* of Shaikh Bakhtiyar Kaki, particularly, became a focus of their devotional feelings. Bahadur Shah I commissioned the construction of a mosque at the *dargah* and built a simple, screened, roofless tomb adjacent to it for himself.¹³⁶ Farukh Siyar embellished it with a screened marble enclosure around the grave itself and two marble gates leading to the grave site. He also built the *dargah's*

135. Babur, *Babur-Namah*, p.475.

136. Asher, *Architecture*, pp.293-4.

original stucco mosque in white marble.¹³⁷ His additions are said to have radically altered the shrine's appearance. Revitalized in white marble and building types, the *dargah* of Shaikh Bakhtiyar Kaki visually transformed so considerably that it more closely resembled Shaikh Muin al-Din Chisti's, patronage to which had ceased under the unfavourable conditions of the country in the century.¹³⁸ Could it be said that a patron saint had become so integral to the spiritual culture of the Mughals that when they lost one they created another? The continued importance of Shaikh Bakhtiyar Kaki's *dargah* is attested by the construction of the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah II's own red sandstone residence, Zafar Mahal, close to it.¹³⁹

Other shrines were tendered devotion. Muhammad Shah is credited with the construction of a wall around the *dargah* of Shaikh Nasir al-Din *Chirag-i Dehli*. He built his own white marbled screened tomb inside the *dargah* of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya.¹⁴⁰ Qudsiya Begam, the Shia queen, patronized the *dargah* of a Shia mystic, Shah Mardan, by constructing several structures. These included an assembly hall, a mosque, a tank, and a walled enclosure.¹⁴¹ Her own popular origins playing no mean role, the heavy patronage she extended to it shows that the queen was trying to create her own counterpart to the Sunni Mughal's Shaikh Bakhtiyar Kaki. Alamgir II apparently made additions and repairs to the *dargah* of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya for an inscription inside the tomb, written by himself, says so.¹⁴² The kind of assimilation *dargah* worship had in the lives of the

137. *Ibid.*, p.294.

138. *Ibid.*, p.295.

139. *Ibid.*, p.310.

140. *Ibid.*, p.296.

141. *Ibid.*, p.304.

142. *Ibid.*, p.307.

later Mughals can be illustrated from an instance. Lal Kunwar, the favourite consort of Jahandar Shah, unable to beget an heir would take the Emperor every Sunday for 40 weeks and together bathe naked in the spring at the *dargah* of Shaikh Nasir al-Din *Chirag-i Dehli* so that the saint may bless them with one.¹⁴³ This was quite different from Akbar's regal commitment to walk hundreds of miles from Agra to the *dargah* of Shaikh Muin al-Din Chisti at Ajmer when his supplications for one were fulfilled with the birth of Salim. The invasion of imperial family by women with popular origins would have only made the assimilation more intimate.

-II-

The assimilation of folkloric and popular cultural patterns of Hindustan by the elite reflects an Indianization of the Mughal ruling class which is also emphasized in the growing Hinduization of their art forms and resurgence of the courtesan institution during the eighteenth century. However this is only an attestation of mutations at the structural level of their everyday socio-religious and cultural life that had been going on ever since they started to rule the country; a process which, in the energetic condition of the times and the melting pot that the society of Shahjahanabad had become, would have only exacerbated.

Consequent upon contact with their subjects the family structure of the Mughals underwent some fundamental mutations at the core of which implicated the status of their women. During the initial years of their rule, i.e. when Babur and Humayun reigned, the Mughal women, relatively speaking, enjoyed far greater freedom than afterwards. To begin with they were not completely secluded from the outside world. Gulbadan Begam's *Humayun-Namah*, the only intimate first hand account of their private world, informs us that Babur's women while in

143. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, 1, p.196.

Kabul were regaled by senior nobles and officers with tales about Hindustan. It also tells that women of Humayun's harem used to mix freely with their male friends and visitors. At times they went out dressed in men's attire, played polo, and applied themselves to literary and cultural pursuits. They were well-versed in the use of pellet bow and other practical arts. In matters of marriage and divorce they enjoyed exceptional freedom. Aiyasha Sultan Begam, the first wife of Babur, 'left him' within three months of their marriage.¹⁴⁴ The Emperor's sister, Khanzada Begam, was married at least thrice if not more. One of the marriage was as a widow and the rest ended in divorce.¹⁴⁵ Similarly one of Humayun's wife, Gulbarg Begam, had been married and separated before.¹⁴⁶ The well-known story of Humayun's eyes falling upon Hamida Banu, his proposal of marriage and her refusal, the repeated offers and the adamant turning downs, the appeal to his stepmother, and the relent after forty days of persuasion underscores the freedom exercised by Mughal women on the issue of marriage as much as an absence of rigid seclusion over them.

All this, however, seems to have changed from the reign of Akbar and the status of Mughal women, as compared to earlier times, dwindled. Perhaps as a result of the matrimonial relationships the Emperor established with the Rajput princely houses a concept of purity of blood and putting the claim to state beyond doubt came to inhabit the Mughal psyche, strengthening the vertical lineage of their family structure. To ensure the legitimacy of the blood and the vigour of vertical lineage, controls over women and their sexuality enhanced. The controls, as described in Chapter 2, were of such severe kind that they only betray a reaction

144. Babur, *Babur-Namah*, pp.35-6.

145. *Ibid.*, pp.17-8, 352.

146. Gulbadan Begam, *Humayun-Namah*, p.230 (List of Ladies).

exaggerated to a change *nouveau*. Integral to the mutation was an absorption of the Hindu marriage system consequent upon which the Mughal women were even further deprived of their freedom. The Hindu marriage system is a sacrament, therefore irrevocable, arranged by the family, and its purpose is to perpetuate the family line/name through a son. It is characterized by a hierarchical relationship of the bride-taker and bride-giver where the family of the latter is bound in a permanent debt to the former. As compared to this the Islamic marriage system is a civil contract, therefore revocable, entered into by mutual consent between two individuals and the purpose is to perpetuate the human race by begetting children. Assimilating the Hindu system, Mughal women lost the freedom they possessed over marriage. Her marriage became an affair of the family where her consent was a mere formality.¹⁴⁷ It became full of formalities and rituals and was no longer the simple and straight affair of an Islamic marriage.¹⁴⁸ The unequal relationship of the families of the bride-takers and bride-givers explains why the Mughal princesses were kept unmarried. Before whom could the House of Timur, conqueror, ruler of an empire, racially superior and exclusive ever subordinate itself? Sons came to be desired; their arrival marked with great celebrations and rejoicings.¹⁴⁹ Daughters were excluded from the right of inheriting property.¹⁵⁰ Divorce was looked down upon and it is hard to find an example amongst the upper sections of Muslim society.¹⁵¹ Like a Hindu woman the Mughal widow ceased to marry. Qatil explicitly states that the practice of widowhood amongst the

147. Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, pp.83-4.

148. *Ibid.*, p.86.

149. *Ibid.*, p.72.

150. *Ibid.*, p.69.

151. *Ibid.*, p.71.

aristocratic Muslims of Hindustan is anti-*shariat* and an Hindu influence.¹⁵² The Mughal widow also lived like a Hindu widow. After Jahangir's death Nur Jahan wore only white clothes and lived in sorrow with her daughter, also a widow, until death.¹⁵³ Writing of the practice of widowhood amongst Muslim women, Mrs. Meer Hassan observes:

'A widow never alters her style of dress, neither does she wear a single ornament, during her widowhood, which generally lasts with her life. I never heard of one single instance, during my twelve years' residence amongst them, of a widow marrying again — they have no law to prohibit it; and I have known some ladies, whose affianced husbands died before the marriage was concluded, who preferred a life of solitude and prayer, although many other overtures were made.'¹⁵⁴

The contrast with the days of Babur and Humayun is evident. By the eighteenth century the status of Mughal women had dwindled to an extent that Taj Mahal, the chief queen of Muhammad Shah, would refrain from holding a male child in her lap and veiled herself even before a boy four years old. Even on death bed she did not allow the physician to examine her.¹⁵⁵ Thus it was not the 'Muslim' rule that led to the abject downfall in the status of Hindu women in medieval times, rather, it was an assimilation of the Hindu family structure — interpreted rather exaggeratedly — to their own asymmetrical family structure by the Mughals and the consequent emulation of the rulers social culture by the subjects. The Indianization of the Mughal family structure in the century of their political decline seems to have been of a level that it appears confounded with the Hindu family structure. Like the latter it was united by a detailed hierarchical

152. Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, p.138.

153. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, p.82.

154. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations*, 1, p.46.

155. Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, p.72.

relationship. The marriage customs, ceremonies, and celebrations of the two became virtually identical [See Plate XVIII]. Thus the *haveli* was the domestic abode for both of them and followed a similar architectural layout within. It is in the eighteenth century that the abode came into maturity.

Absorption of the ways of life of their subjects by the Mughals manifested in the love for display, gaiety, and merry-making or, contrariwise, the austerities and fasting on religious occasions. The devotion expressed at the *dargahs* of the saints, as this chapter suggests, was much like that of a godling by the Hindus, full of sensuousness and exuberant colour. The celebration of the saint's *urs* was in the 'pagan' tradition of the land where passions found a free play. Shah Waliullah's consideration of the *dargahs* as grounds for holding *melas* by the devotees is indeed telling. The *charis* (processions) taken out in honour of the saints was also an exposition of the Hindu penchant for display. This is reflected in the celebration of *Muharram* with great splendour, its public mourning, abstinence from entertainment and pleasure, rigorous fasting, taking out of the *tazia*, prostrating before its magnificence, and setting it afloat.¹⁵⁶ Shah Waliullah wrote:

'You have adopted such false practices, which have drastically changed the religion. For example on the tenth of Muharram, you perform undesirable acts. One section amongst you has reserved this day for mourning, others have fixed it for games and *tamasha*, while others indulge in many irreligious things.'¹⁵⁷

Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali wrote:

'I have conversed with many sensible men of the Mussulmaun persuasion, on the subject of celebrating Mahurram, and from all I can learn, the pompous display is grown into a habit, by a long residence amongst people, who make a merit of showy parades in all

156. *Ibid.*, pp.156-7.

157. Quoted by Suri in *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, from Z.U. Malik, "Life and Times of Muhammad Shah", Mss. thesis, Aligarh Muslim University.

their festivals. Foreign Mussulmauns are equally surprised as Europeans, when they visit Hindoostaun, and first see the Tazia conveyed about in procession, which would be counted sacrilegious in Persia or Arabia; but here, the ceremony is not complete, without a mixture of pageantry with the deeply expressed and public exposure of their grief.¹⁵⁸

The spirit of the festival, *Shab-i Baraat*, from having grown in India was very much Hindu: vigils, illuminations, and fireworks.¹⁵⁹ Its gaiety had captured the imagination of the Mughal artists and the festival forms a theme of their repertoire. Condemning it Shah Waliullah remarked:

‘On the day of Shab-i Baraat you, like uncivilized nations, indulge in games and amusements, while others think that large quantities of food should be prepared and sent to their dead forefathers.’¹⁶⁰

Even *Id*, the major Islamic festival, was celebrated with festivities, fireworks, feasting and, not the least with music and dance.¹⁶¹ All this severely contrasted with the puritan spirit of Islam.

Indianization of the Mughals is profoundly reflected in their women whose apartments, more than any other space, were a vibrant theatre of local influences. There were the countless rites of passage sacralizing life's stages — childbirth, marriage, death — which were borrowed from the surrounding sea of the popular culture of their subjects.¹⁶² There were the numerous practices and beliefs designed to cope with evil or ward off disaster such as charming away spirits, curing illnesses, and generally to keep things even.¹⁶³ The demand of Koki Jui, the

158. Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations*, 1, pp.53-4.

159. Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, pp.157-8.

160. Quoted by Suri in *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, p.158, from Malik, "Life and Times of Muhammad Shah".

161. Suri. *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, p.154.

162. Minault, 'Other Voices, Other Rooms', p.113.

163. *Ibid.*, p.114.

geomancer, and her father, Jan Muhammad, and the 'holy man', Abdul Gaffur, in the imperial harem reflects a growing hold of such beliefs over its inmates during the century. They knew magic spells and incantations, could divine, and interpret dreams and omens in the local idiom. Much of the political power that the three had acquired rested upon the sway they exercised over these women. Charms and amulets seem to have been eagerly sought. They were sold even in the name of Mirza Bedil, the poet.¹⁶⁴ Shah Waliullah, who otherwise condemned such practices, could not avoid distributing them.¹⁶⁵ The extent to which the women had been Indianized is manifested in the *Begmati Zaban*. The 'graphic, witty, and earthy' idiom which was the language's life, its imprecations, curses and endearments were derived from the regional dialects such as Khari Boli, Braj Bhasha, Awadhi, and Dakkani rather than Arabic or Persian.¹⁶⁶

The penetration of the socio-religious culture of their subjects into the lives of the Mughals appears to have been of a very close kind. This explains the voices raised against the 'un-Islamic' practices¹⁶⁷, and the reformist efforts in the following century which sought to purge their life of them, especially of the women.

164. Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa*, p.123.

165. Suri, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century*, p.135.

166. Insha, *Darya-i Latafat*, pp.77-89, 136; also Minault, 'Begmati Zaban: Women's Language and Culture', pp.161, 166.

167. Such as Shah Waliullah's.

Conclusion

The decline of the Mughal empire played a catalytic role in Shahjahanabad. The liberation of its citizens from the power of a mighty state and the confinements of a chaste and puritanical Court provoked them into redefining their everyday lives in ways which wrought many mutations and created much that was anew. Exacerbating many existing processes the decline, also, solidified and expanded much that was old. Even as the mutations and the creativities have been directly addressed to in Chapter 4, they exhibit a response that was altogether emotional and intimate: the pretty *haveli*, the flower-like maidens in the paintings, the lyrical *khayal*, the evocative *thumri*, the realistic love *ghazals* and *masnavis*. But these are only cultural representations, the redefinition manifested in the city itself. Thus it was, ironically, during the period of the Mughal decline that Shahjahanabad became truly intimate to its inhabitants and the city may be said to have emotionally come into its own. Quite apart from having lost much of its formalism, the lay-city redefining the imperial-city, took it to its lanes and bylanes and assimilated it. On the other hand, the imperial-city absorbing the lay-city with less restraint, took it within the precincts of the palace-fortress. Thus if the ordinary citizens came to identify with the *qila* (Fort), the Jama'i Masjid, the Begam ki Serai, the royal bank of the Jamuna, the imperial citizens came to revel in the colours and merry-making of *Holi*, regale themselves in the street arts and entertainments, and vibe with creativities that were more emotional. In the *havelis* of the city, the steps of Jama'i Masjid, the pigeon-fancying, the kite-flying, the Urdu verses on the lips of the emperor and the alms-seeker can be seen the paths of the two Shahjahanabad crossing, merging, each not distant from the other. To its Muslim populace Delhi was no longer the external extract *Dehli* but

the more indigenous *Dilli*. One may say that it was in the eighteenth century the city really became what is conjured up by 'Mughal Delhi' and acquired roots. Delhi came to mean its society and its society came to mean Delhi.

Intensifying the existing processes the decline spurred the Indianization of the family structure of the Mughals. Assimilating the culture of their subjects the Mughals appear integrated in their adopted home country. The well-springs of the cultural creativity in the post-Mughal era being Mughal, the latter's art styles and formats were assimilated in the cultural history of the city's citizens. So were their graces and courtesies which even today, in a 'Hindu' India, are considered the hallmark of a sophisticate. In the crucible that was the eighteenth century the Mughals, their creativities, their constructs became part of the heritage of Delhi whilst the reinterpretation of these gave a burgeoning middle-class their first urbane social culture.

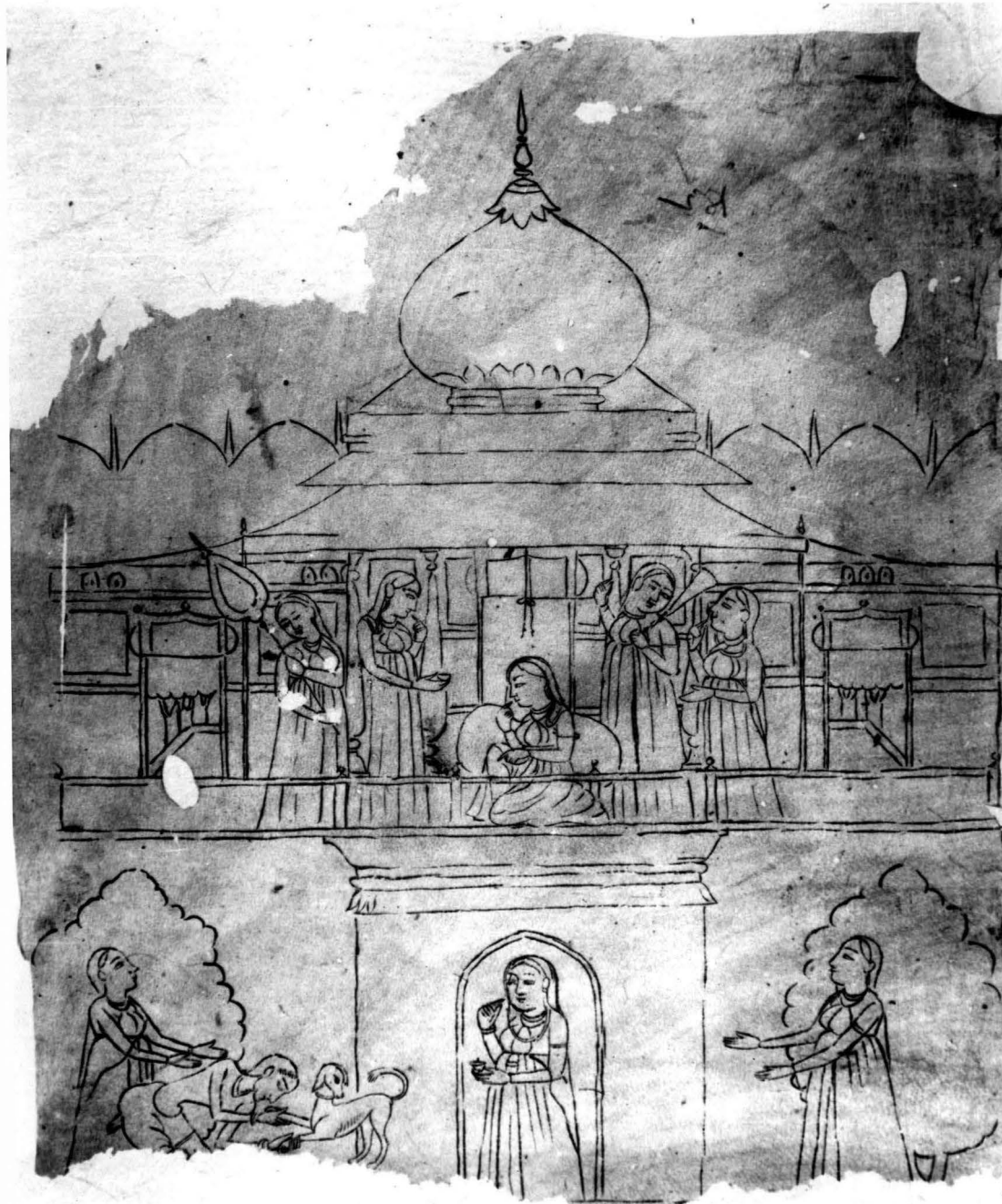


Plate I National Museum [NM] 47.110/1891

A mistress and her attendants are sitting in the *dalaan* which, it can be seen, is a hall-like structure having no doors. The storage spaces — the only spaces in the *havelis* having them — are located here at the far inside and are distinguished by screens rolled up [Mughal, c.1800].

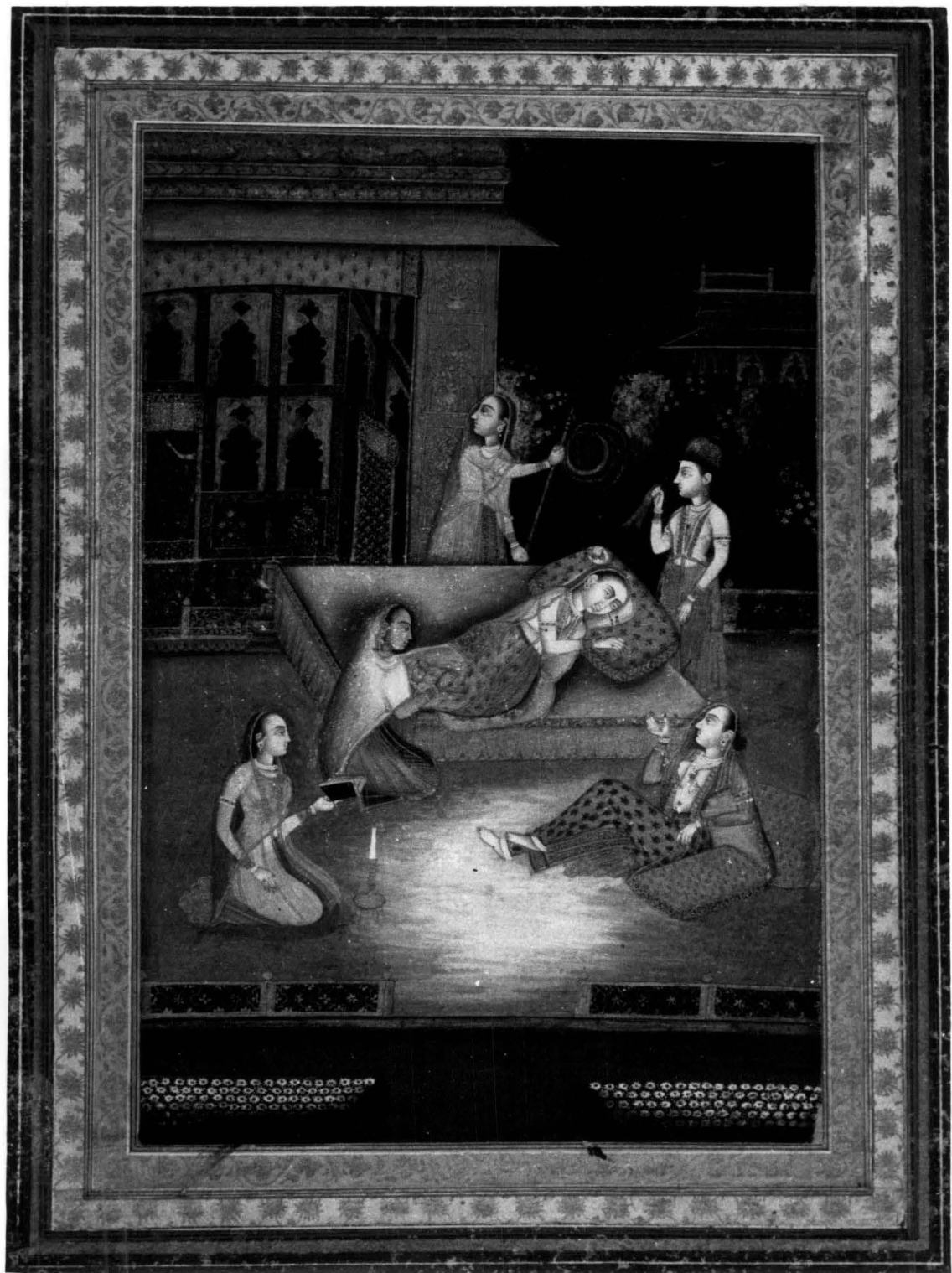


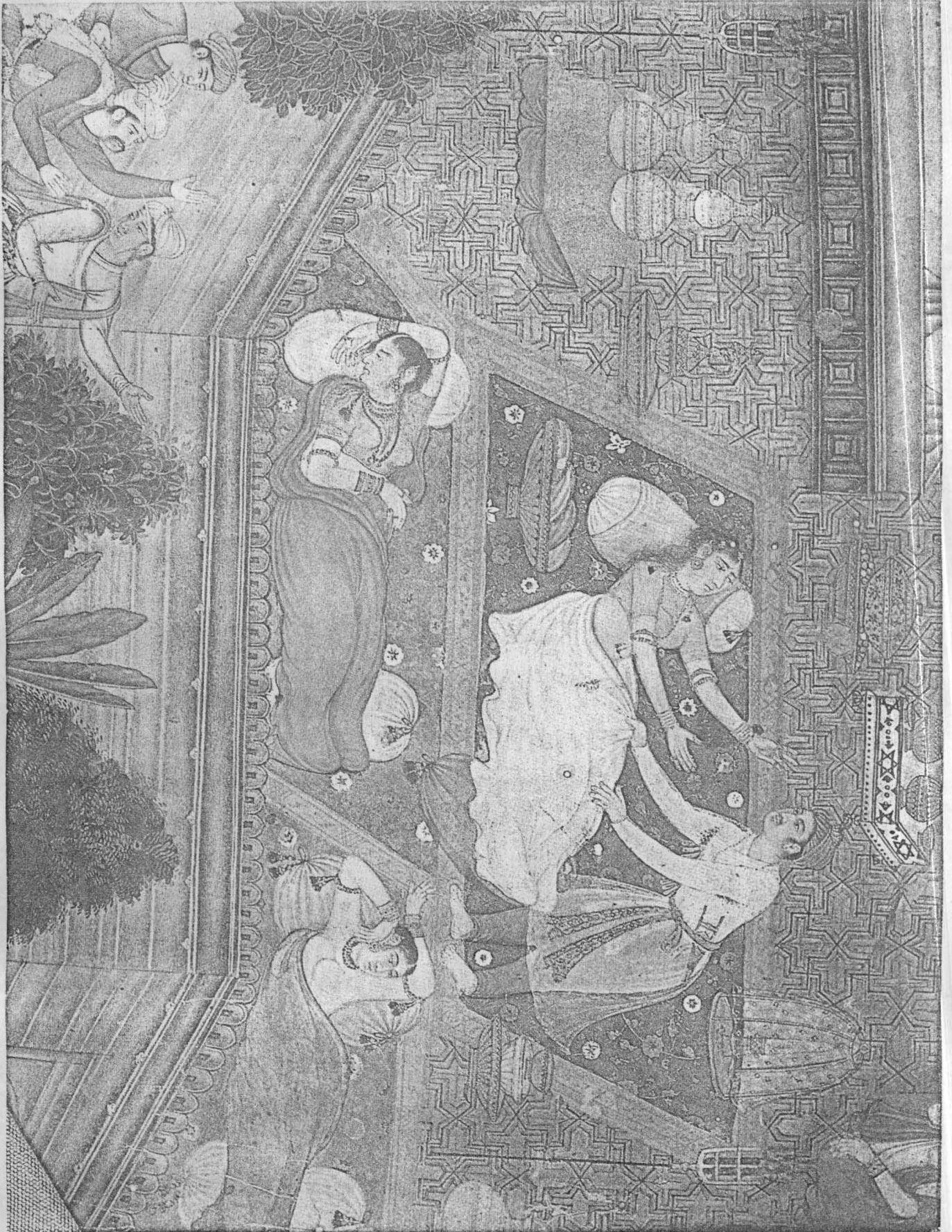
Plate II

NM 57.47/1

Upon the terrace, under the open sky, a normally clad mistress is being put to sleep by domestics, a story-teller narrating tales by the candle light, and an entertainer. The tales were not always of the most 'decent kind' [Mughal, c.1775].

Plate III

Social invasion of sexual privacy: The turning aside of their faces by the two co-wives is the only privacy offered to the prince and another co-wife. It is hard to say that the portrayal is entirely imaginary, for Mughal miniature paintings at best sought to stylize existential realities.



(Source: K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, Plate III)



Plate IV

NM 47.110/1778

That the body lacked privacy is exhibited in the presence of four semi-naked women bathing together (the woman standing behind and holding a towel seems an attendant); presence of a child in the background; and the open space where the bath is being taken. As private an activity as the bath, it appears, had no space ear-marked [Mughal, early 18c].

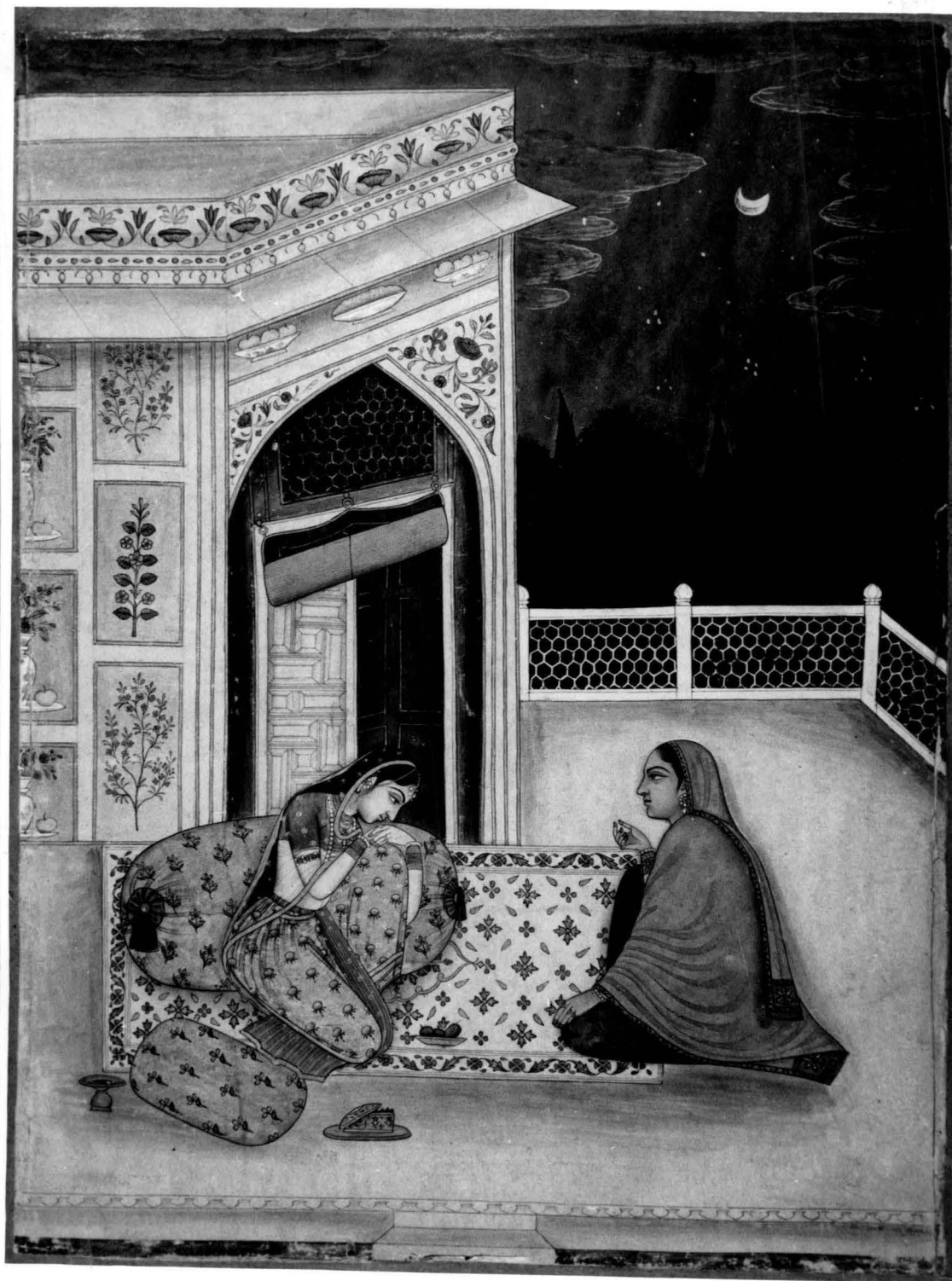


Plate V

NM 56.36/19

A love-lorn mistress is being comforted by the maid. The intimacy of the scene and the commanding position of the maid notwithstanding, an adherence to codes of hierarchy regulating the master-servant relationship can be observed. The *masnad* (bolster) and the carpet are the mistress' privilege, while the status of the maid is encoded in her position at the edge of the carpet, distant from the mistress. Sitting on the carpet half-in, half-out, the maid evokes the inclusive-exclusive character of the servant-master relationship. The glaring contrast in the apparel of the two places one at the top and the other at the bottom of the social ladder [Mughal, 1740-50].

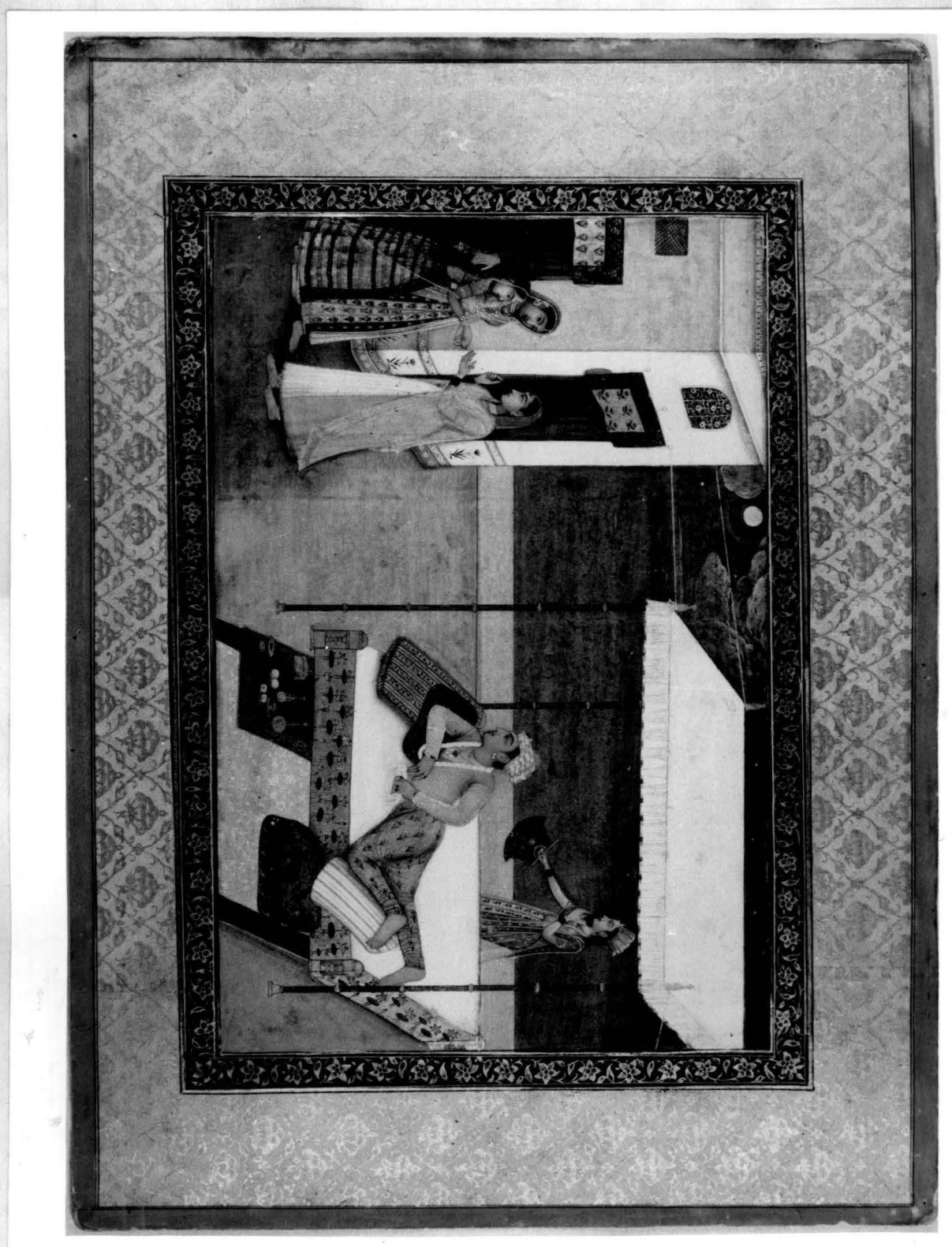


Plate VI

NM 79.195

Servants were conduits in the love relationships of masters. Here two maids are seen to escort a mistress to her lover. In the painting can be seen the doors attached to the storage spaces [Late Mughal, end 17c].

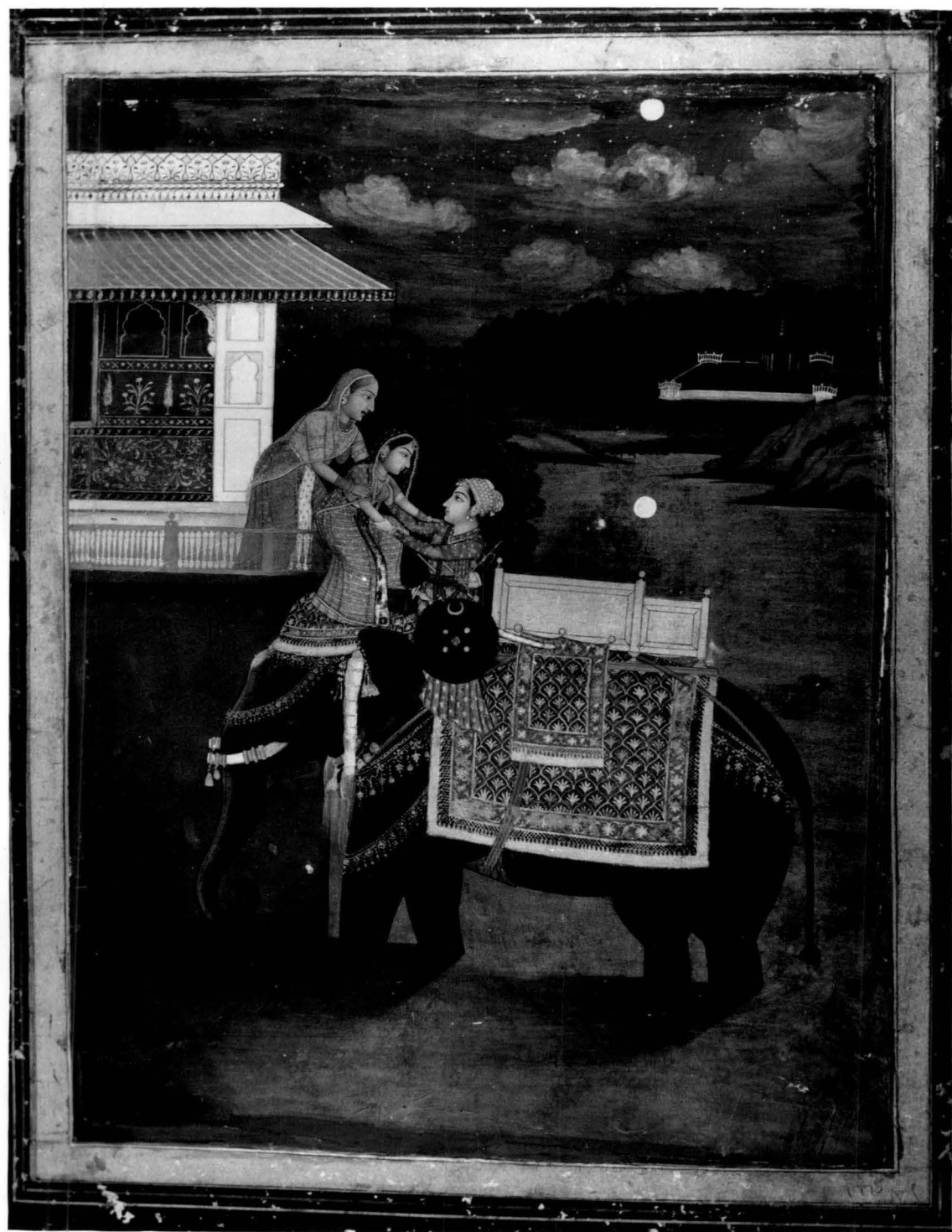


Plate VII

NM 58.58/28

The eager participation of the beloved in the act of elopement with her lover with encouragement and help from her maid are reflected in this Mughal miniature [Mughal, late qtr. 18c].



Plate VIII

NM 47.110/1766

The wanton scene cannot erase the forms of hierarchy regulating the master-servant relationship. Loose tresses, an outstretched body, reclining in explicitly erotic posture against the bolster, the mistress is positioned in the centre of the carpet. The maid, on the other hand, is distinguished by her covered head, an upright posture, supporting her mistress' limb, and ministering to her lesbian desires. In the background another maid seems to be keeping both a watch over an unwelcome intruder as well as preparing an aid to satisfy her mistress' erotic urge whose intensity is highlighted by the wayward lines signifying uncontrolled energy [Mughal, 18c].

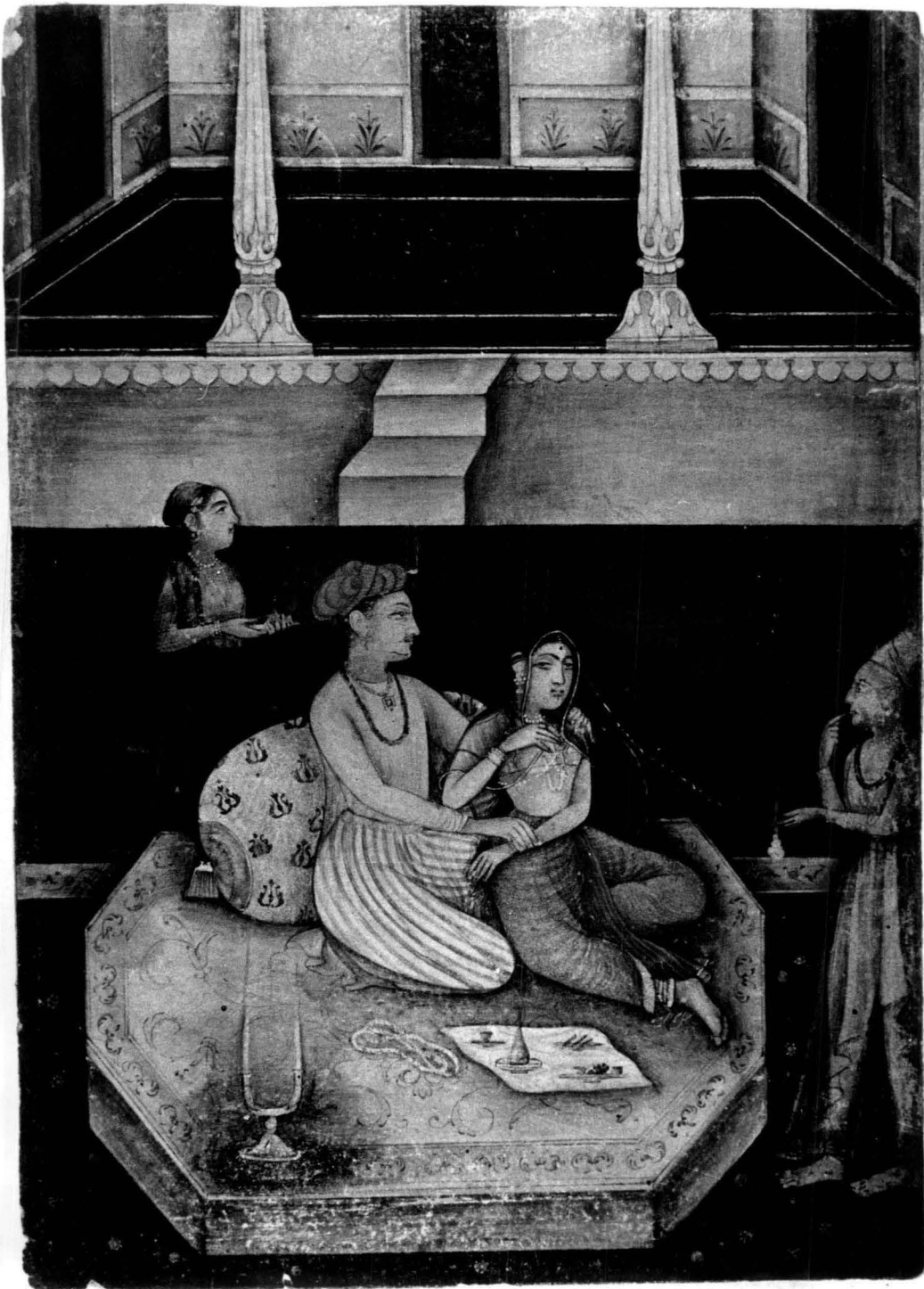


Plate IX

NM 47.110/2042

As intimate a relationship as love was not private from the servants signifying that they were both viewed as people whose help and intervention in the fruition of the relationship was required, but not viewed as people whose gaze at the act of making love could embarrass the aristocratic lovers [Mughal, c. late 1775]. To reiterate there is the painting of Muhammad Shah in dalliance surrounded by servants on all sides. Essentially, such paintings reflect and reinforce medieval society's preoccupation with stereotyping of status hierarchy in which individual identity gets submerged.

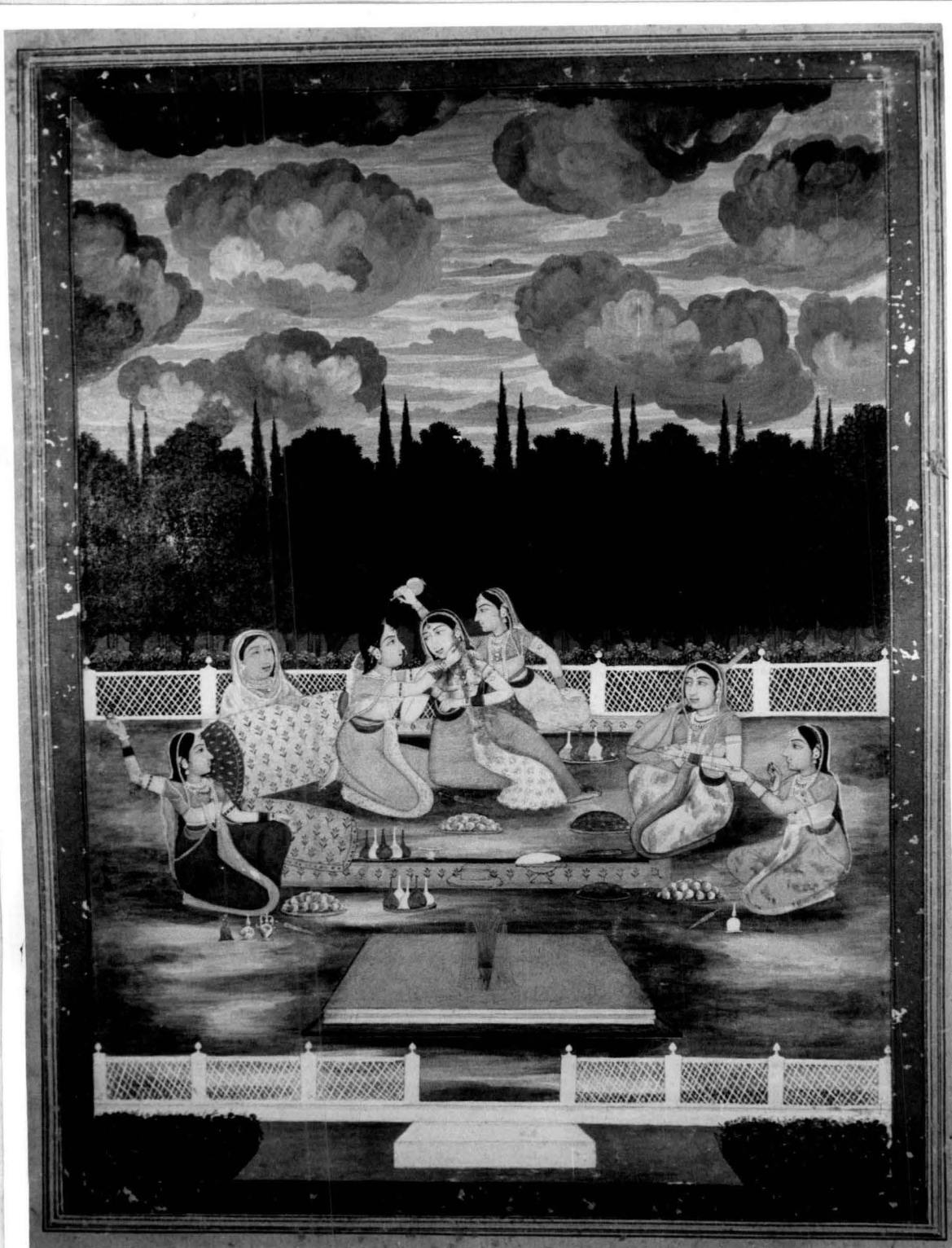


Plate X

NM 58.58/25

In the privacy of their assembly, on the occasion of *Holi*, women are partying. A statement of the conviviality of their assembly is made by the artist through a prominent display of wine-pitchers. The festival is a pretext for the women to create their own social time even as it provides them a space to subvert the normative structure [Mughal, last qtr. 18c].



Plate XI

NM 47.110/1767

A convivial assembly of women — the wine and *hookah* and a sensual ambience [Mughal, 18c].

BN 01442 (part of) No. 1165. 14/57600





BN Od 42 (pt. II) Res
Museum M39691

IX

BN Od 42 (pt. 1st) Res.
No. 1111211



PLATE XIV





Plate XVI

NM 52.32

Dara Shukoh enjoying the game of acrobats [Mughal, c.1640-45].

Plate XVII

Muhammad Shah taking part in *Holi* (Source: Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, Plate IV). Ghulam Husain Khan writes in *Seir Mutaqherin*:

'Holi... is... a festival of Hindoo institution, but held so sacred amongst our delicate Grandees, and so very obligatory, that they never fail to spend a great deal of money in dancers, such kind of spectacles, and especially in making presents to low people, who, at such a particular time, are in possession of acknowledging those favours by the liberty of giving to the donors as well as to each other, a great deal of abusive and shameful language, and that too, not in obscure terms, but in the broadest coarsest language, and by naming every by its proper term, without any regard to rank, station, or decency (Syed Ghulam Husain Khan, *Seir Mutaqherin*, 3, pp.144-5).



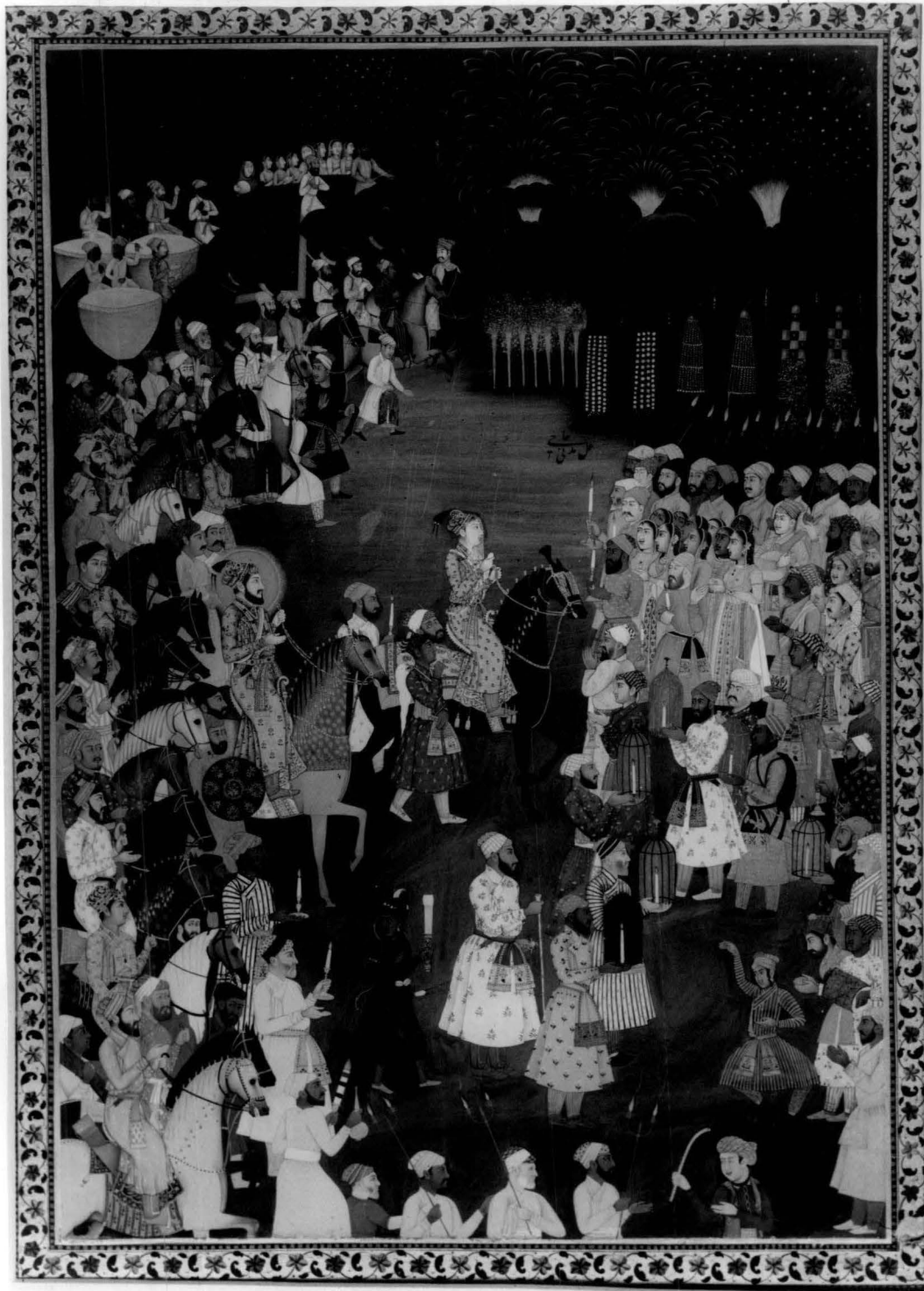
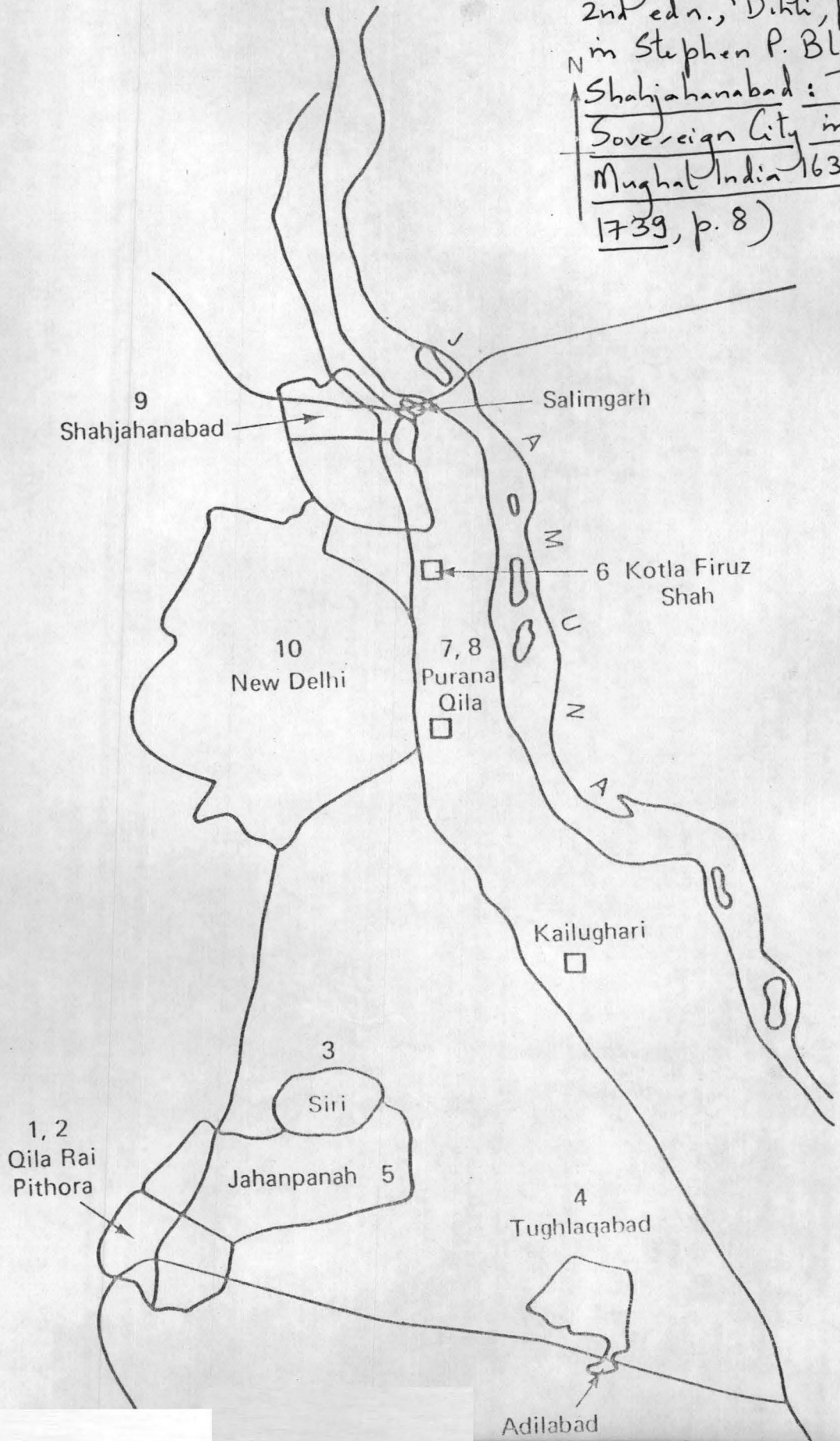


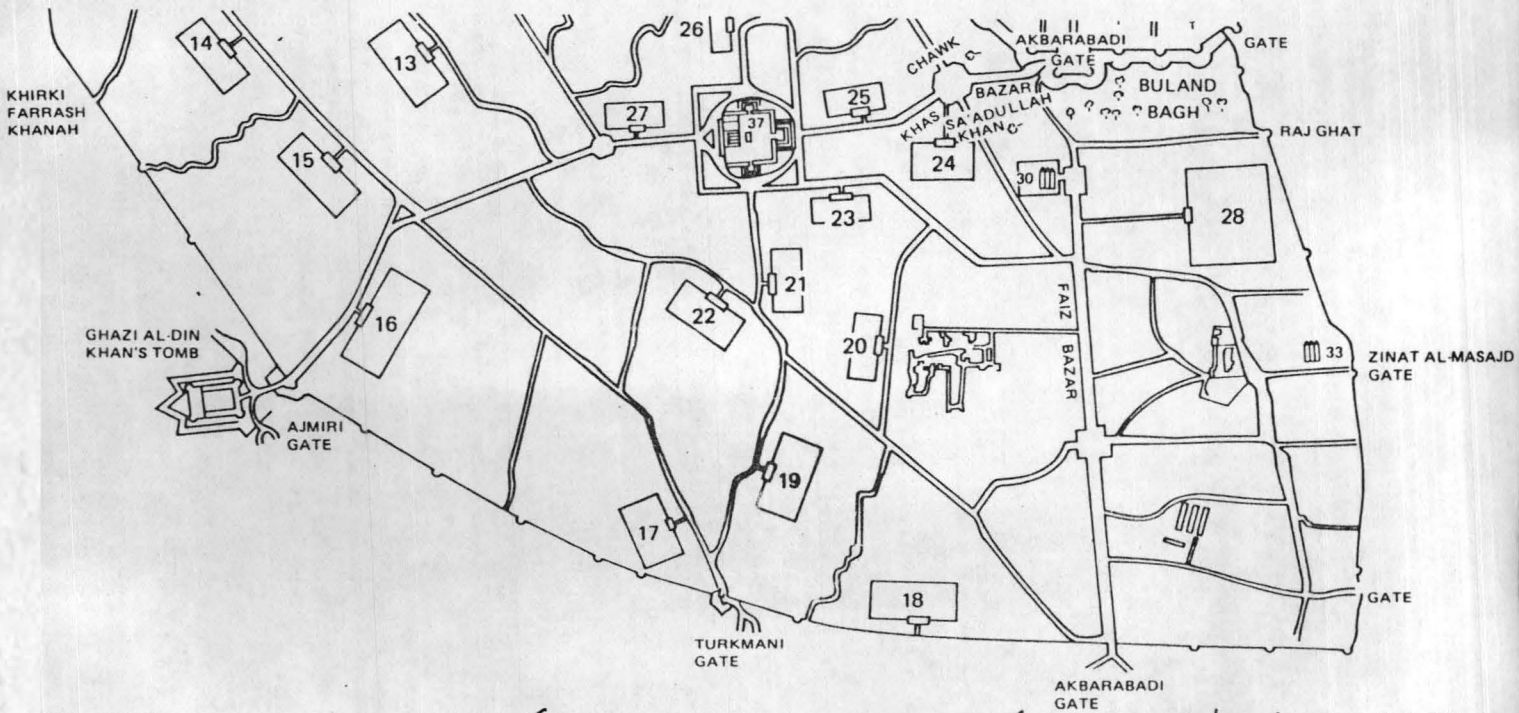
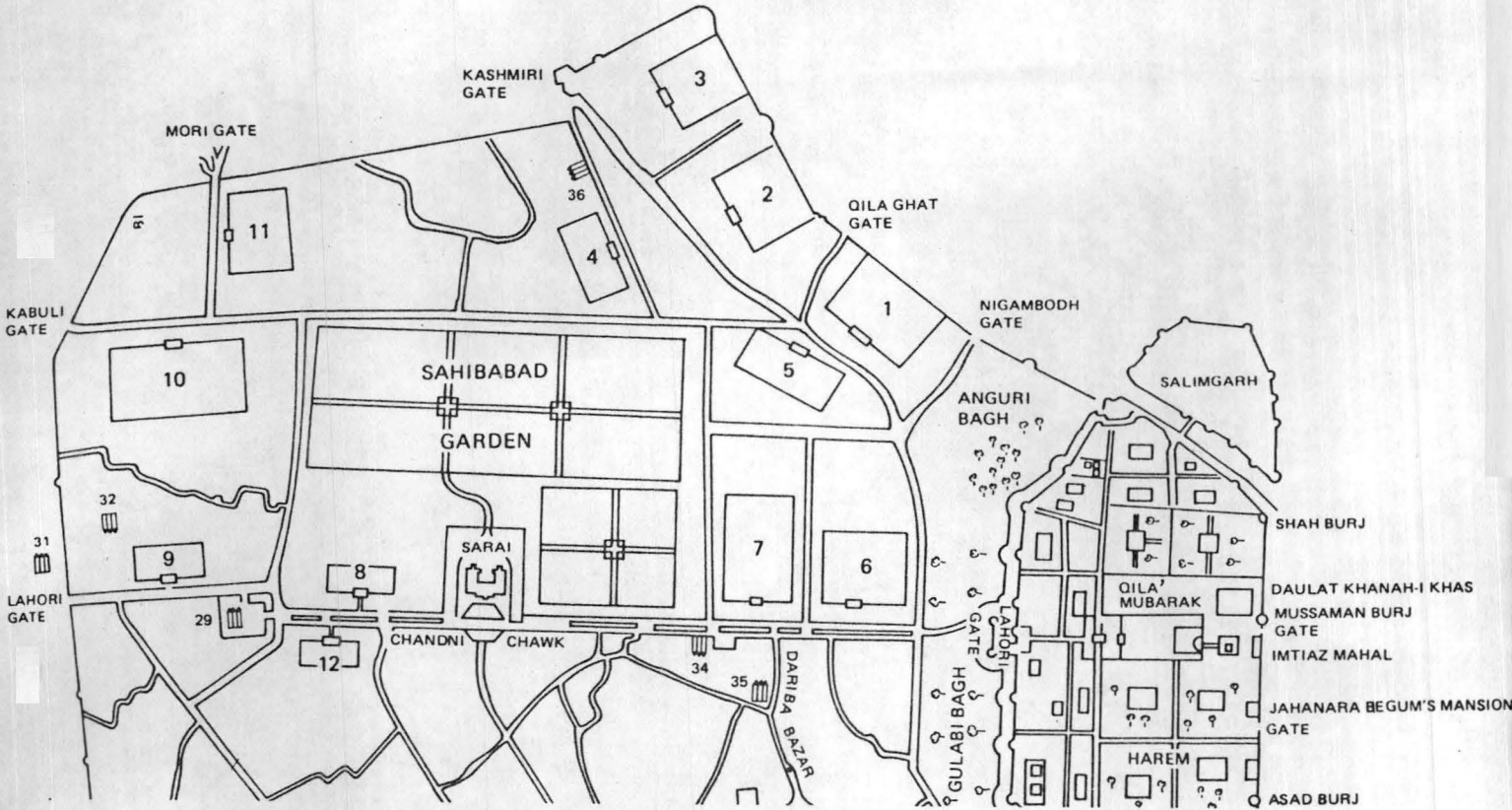
Plate XVIII

NM 58.58/38

Dara Shukoh's procession of marriage to the bride's home for the wedding ceremony reflects the Indianization of the Mughal ruling class. According to the Indian custom the bride is to be given by her family to the groom who marches to take her away [Mughal, c.1750].

Map 1 Cities of Delhi
(source: J. Burton-Page,
Encyclopedia of Islam,
2nd edn., 'Dihli', p. 261,
in Stephen P. Blake,
Shahjahanabad: The
Sovereign City in
Mughal India 1639 -
1739, p. 8)



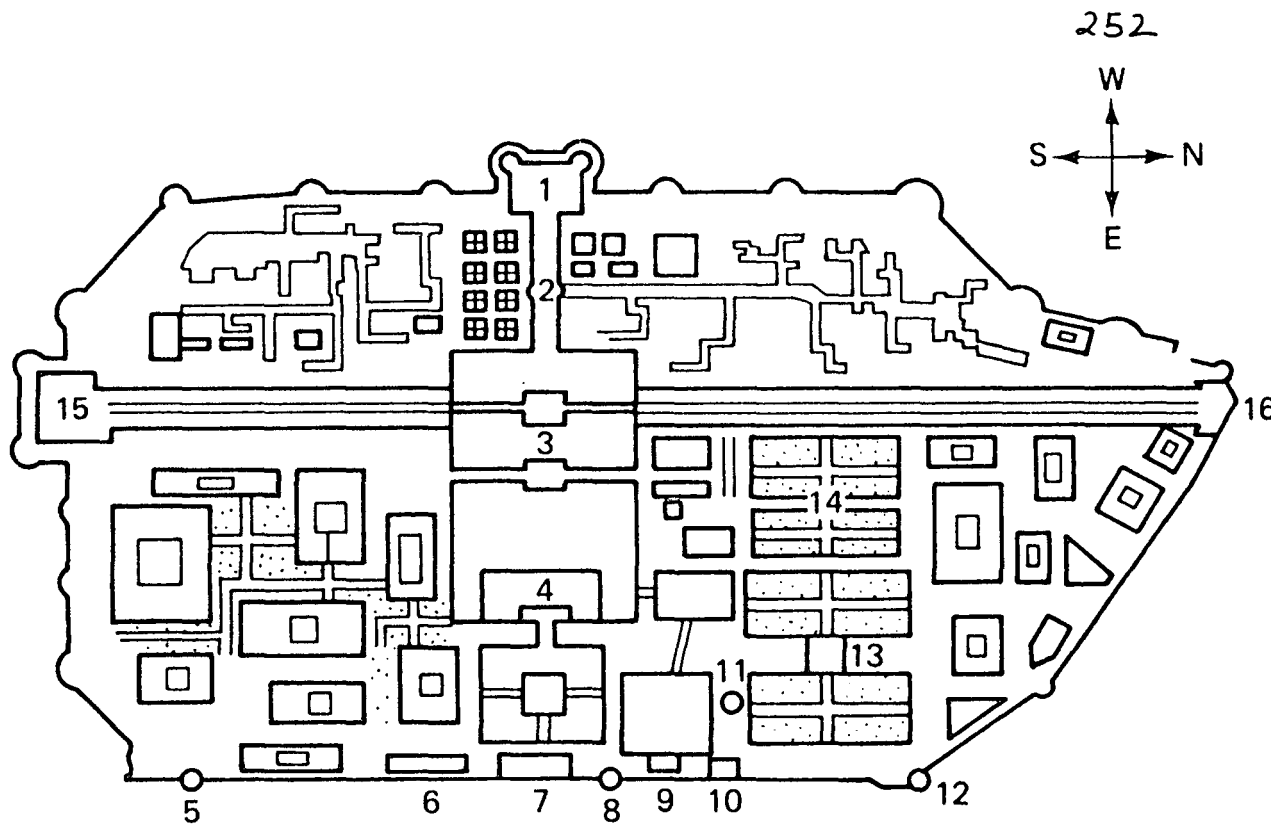


Map II Mansions and mosques in Shahjahanabad 1739 (source: Stephen P. Blake, Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India 1639-1739, pp. 72-3). List of mansions/mosques on next page.

List of mansions and mosques

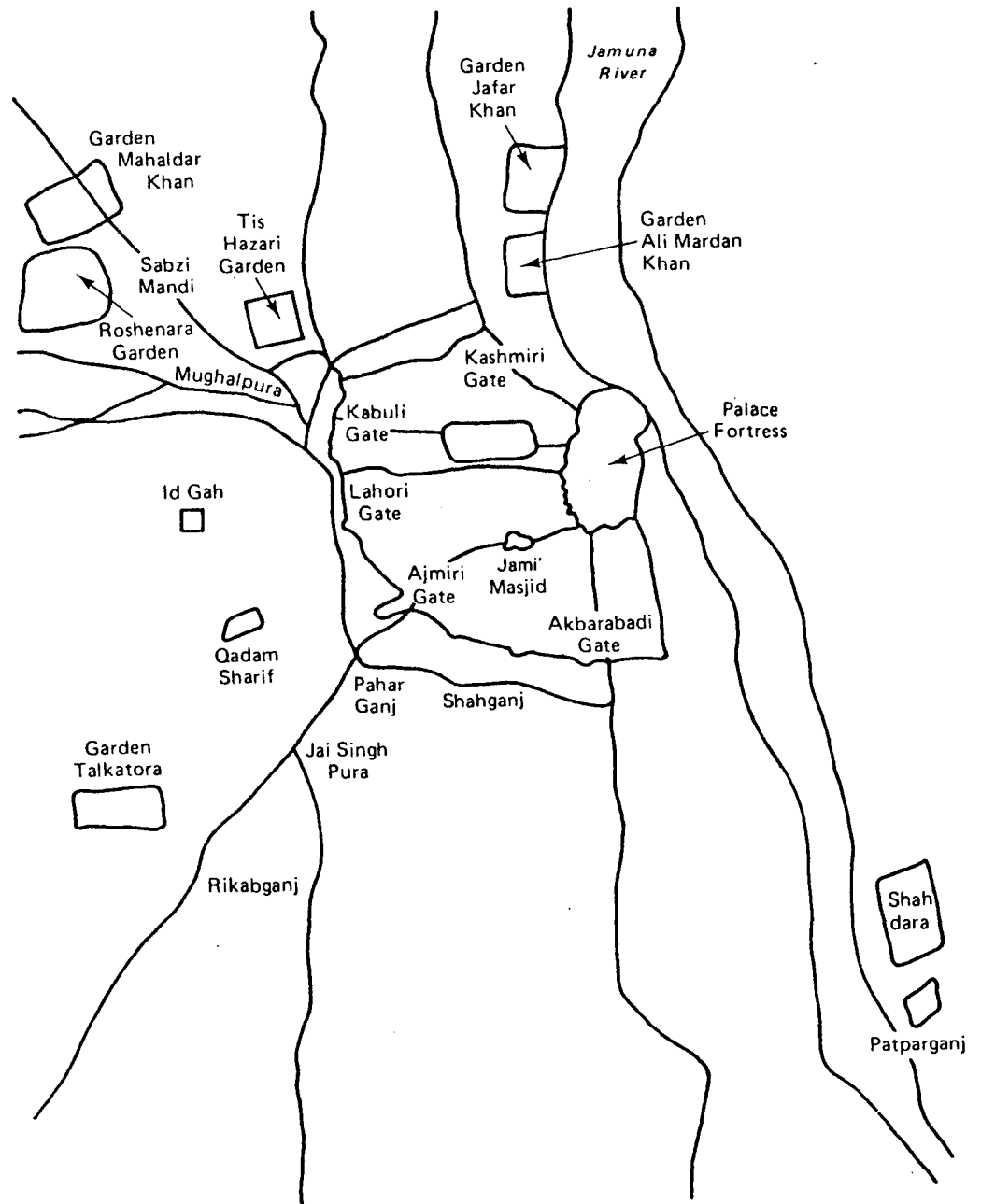
1. The mansion of Safdar Jang
2. The mansion of Dara Shukoh
3. The mansion of Ali Mardan Khan
4. The mansion of Lutfullah Khan
5. The mansion of Majd al-Daulah
6. The mansion of Shaista Khan
7. The mansion of Raushan al-Daulah
8. The mansion of Ghazi Ram
9. The mansion of Habshi Khan
10. The mansion of Saadat Khan
11. The mansion of Ismail Khan
12. The mansion of Haider Quli Khan
13. The mansion of Sher Afghan Khan
14. The mansion of Sipahdar Khan
15. The mansion of Adinah Beg Khan
16. The mansion of Qamar al-Din Khan
17. The mansion of Muzzafar Khan
18. The mansion of Mir Khan
19. The mansion of Mir Hashim
20. The mansion of Azam Khan
21. Matiya Mahal
22. The mansion Bakhtawar Khan
23. The mansion of Ahmad Ali Khan
24. The mansion of Khan Dauran
25. The mansion of Sarbuland Khan
26. The mansion of Ustad Hamid
27. The mansion of Shahji
28. The mansion of Sa'adullah Khan/Ghazi al-Din Khan
29. Fatehpuri Masjid
30. Akbarabadi Masjid
31. Sirhindi Masjid
32. Aurangabadi Masjid
33. Zinat-un-Nissa Masjid
34. Sonhari Masjid
35. Masjid of Sharif al-Daulah
36. Fakr-un-Nissa Masjid
37. Jama'i Masjid*

* Blake, *Shahjahanabad : The Sovereign City*, pp.75-82.



1. Lahori Gate
2. Covered bazaar
3. Naqqar Khanah (Drum room)
4. Daulat Khanah-i khas-o-'am (Hall of Ordinary Audience)
5. Asad Burj (Lion Tower)
6. Jahanara Begum's mansion
7. Imtiaz Mahal (Distinguished Palace)
8. Jharokah-i Darshan (Balcony of Audience)
9. Daulat Khanah-i Khas (Hall of Special Audience)
10. Hammam (bath)
11. Moti Masjid (Pearl Mosque)
12. Shah Burj (King's Tower)
13. Hayat Baksh Garden (Life-giving Garden)
14. Mahtab Bagh Garden (Moonlight Garden)
15. Akbarabadi Gate
16. Salimgarh Gate

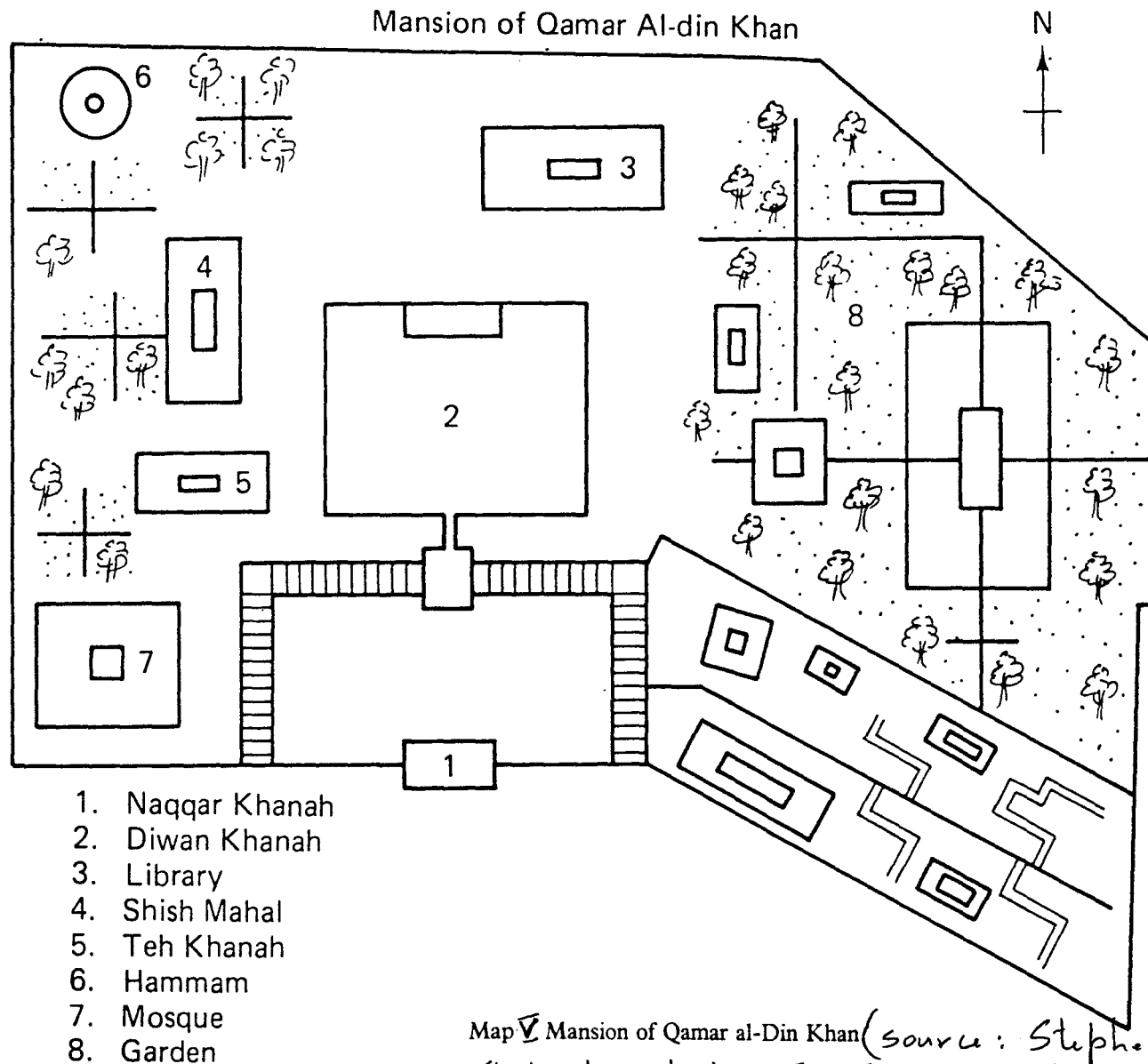
Map III Palace-fortress (source: Gordon Sanderson, 'Shahjahan's Fort, Delhi', *Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Report 1911-12*, plate 11, in Stephen P. Blake, Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639-1739, p. 37).



Map IV Suburbs of Shahjahanabad 1739 (source: Stephen P. Blake, Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639-1739, p. 59).

The *haveli* of
Qamar al-Din Khan

This is the layout of a formal *haveli*. A more ordinary *haveli*, however, underwent adaptations and lost some of its formalism and aristocratic features. The *naqqar-khana* absent, the gateway opened directly into the *deodhi* (vestibule); the *diwan-khanah* mutated into the more domestic *mardana* (men's apartments); the structures towards the north-west became the generic *zenana* (women's apartments). Features such as the mosque, *hammam* (bath-house), library, and the garden missing, the habitable space of this *haveli* was organised around the courtyard which usually had a well, a tree, some shrubs, a cow or goat, a domesticated bird, and a shrine (if the residents were Hindus) or sometimes an old grave (if the residents were Muslims).



Map V Mansion of Qamar al-Din Khan (source: Stephen P. Blake, Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India 1639-1739, p. 46).

Select Bibliography

Primary Sources

Persian Works

- Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, translated by H.S. Jarrett, 3 vols., Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1989 (reprint). First published, 1927-49.
- Abul Fazl, *Akbar-Namah*, translated by H. Beveridge, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1989 (reprint). First published, 1902-1939.
- Bayazid Biyat, *Tazkira-i Humayun wa-Akbar*, edited by Hidayat Husain, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1941.
- Chander Bhan Brahmin, *Chahar Chaman Brahmin*, Persian Manuscript Collection, India Office Library, London, Ethe 2093.
- Chaturman Rai, *Chahar Gulshan*, Persian Manuscript Collection, British Museum, London, Or.1791.
- Ghulam Muhammad Khan, *Navad al-Qisas*, Persian Manuscript Collection, British Museum, London, Or.1866.
- Girdhar Das, tr., *Ramayan*, Manuscripts Persians, no.221, Code: Supplement IP, Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris.
- Gulbadan Begam, *Humayun-Namah*, translated by A.S. Beveridge, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1989 (reprint). First published, 1902.
- Hakim Maharat Khan Isfahani, *Bahajat al-Alam*, Persian Manuscript Collection, India Office Library, London, Ethe 729.
- Ibn Batuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-54*, translated and selected by H.A.R. Gibb, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1983. First published, 1929.
- Inayat Khan, *Shahjahan-Namah*, translated by A.R. Fuller, edited by W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990.
- Khafi Khan, Muhammad Hashim, *Muntakhab al-Lubab*, edited by Maulavi Kabir al-Din Ahmad, 3 vols., Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1869-1925.
- Mirza Kamran, "Mirza-Namah", translated by Mawlavi M. Hidayat Husain, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, New Series, 9, 1913.

- Mirza Sangin Beg, *Seir al-Manazil*, Urdu translation by Sharif Husain Qazmi, Ghalib Institute, Delhi, 1983.
- Muhammad Faiz Baksh, *Tarikh-i Farah Baksh*, translated by William Hoey, 2 vols., Allahabad, 1889.
- Muhammad Salih Kambo Lahauri, *Amal-i Salih*, edited and annotated by G. Yazdani, revised by Wahid Quraishi, 3 vols., Majlis-i Taraqqi-i Adab, Lahore, 1967-72.
- Muhammad Salih Kambo Lahauri, *Bahar-i Sukhan*, Persian Manuscript Collection, British Museum, London, Or. 178.
- Muhammad Waris, *Padshah-Namah*, Persian Manuscript Collection, British Museum, London, Add.6556.
- Nawab Samsam al-Daulah Shah Nawaz Khan and Abdul Hayy, *Ma'asir al-Umara*, translated by H. Beveridge, revised, annotated, and completed by Baini Prasad, 3 vols., Janaki Prakashan, Patna, 1979.
- Nur al-Din Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, translated by Alexander Rogers, edited by H. Beveridge, 2 vols., Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1989 (reprint). First published, 1909-14.
- Shams Siraj Afif, *Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi*, edited by M. Wilayat Husain, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1888-91.
- Syed Ghulam Husain Khan, *Seir Mutaqherin*, translated by M. Raymond also known as Haji Mustafa, 4 vols., Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1990 (reprint). First published, 1926.
- Zahir al-Din Babur, *Babur-Namah*, translated by A.S. Beveridge, 2 vols., Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1989 (reprint). First Published, 1921.

European Works

- Ali, Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns of India: Description of their Manners, Customs, Habits, and Religious Opinions made during a Twelve Years' Residence in their Immediate Society*, Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, Delhi, 1973 (reprint). First published, 1832.
- Bernier, Francois, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, 1656-1668*, translated by Irving Brock, edited by Archibald Constable, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1989 (reprint). First published, 1934.

- Buyers, William, *Recollections of Northern India with Observations on the Origin, Customs, and Moral Sentiments of the Hindoos and Principal Places on the Ganges*, John Show, Paternoster Row, London, 1848.
- Craufurd, Q., *Sketches Chiefly Relating to the History, Religion, Learning, and Manners of the Hindoos*, 2 vols., Research Publications, Delhi, 1976 (reprint). First published, 1790.
- Da Laet, Joannes, *The Empire of the Great Mogol*, translated by J.S. Hoyland, annotated by S.N. Banerjee, Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, Delhi, 1975 (reprint). First published, 1928.
- Dow, Alexander, *The History of Hindustan*, 3 vols., Today & Tomorrow's Printers & Publishers, Delhi, 1973 (reprint). First published, 1973.
- Dubois, Abbe J.A., *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, translated by Henry K. Beauchamp, Asian Educational Services, Delhi, 1990 (reprint). First published 1996.
- Dubois, Abbe J.A., *Letters on the State of Christianity in India*, Longman, London, 1823.
- Forbes, James, *Oriental Memoirs*, 4 vols., White, Cochrane, And Co. Horace's Head, London, 1813.
- Forster, George, *A Journey from Bengal to England, Through the Northern Part of India, Kashmere, Afganistan, and Persia and into Russia by the Caspean Sea*, 2 vols., Languages Department, Patiala, 1970.
- Foster, William, ed., *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, Delhi, 1985. First published, 1921.
- Foster, William, ed., *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615-1619, As Narrated in His Journal and Correspondence*, 2 vols., Hakluyt Society, London, 1899.
- Foster, William, ed., *The Journal of John Jourdain, 1608-17*, Hakluyt Society, Cambridge, 1905.
- Francklin, W., *The History of the Reign of Shah-Aulum, the Present Emperor of Hindustan*, Panini Office, Allahabad, 1915.
- Fraser, James, *The History of Nadir Shah*, A. Miller, London, 1742.

- Hodges, William, *Travels in India during the years 1790, 1781, 1782 and 1783*, J. Edwards, Pall-Mall, London, 1793.
- Kaye, M.M., ed., *The Golden Calm: An English Lady's Life in Moghul Delhi*, Webb & Bower, Exter, 1980.
- Laird, M.A., ed., *Bishop Heber in Northern India: Selection from Heber's Journal*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971.
- Manrique, Sebastien, *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643*, translated by C.E. Luard, assisted by H. Hosten S.J., 2 vols., Hakluyt Society, Oxford, 1927.
- Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia do Mogor*, translated by William Irvine, 4 vols., Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1990 (reprint). First published 1907-08.
- Modave, L.L. Polisy de, "The Delhi Empire a Century after Bernier", translated by Jadunath Sarkar, *Islamic Culture*, July, 1937.
- Monserrate, Antonio. *The Commentary of Father Monserrate S.J.*, translated by J.S. Hoyland, annotated by S.N. Banerjee, Oxford University Press, 1922.
- Nugent, Lady Maria, *Journal of a Residence in India, 1811-15*, 2 vols., n.p., 1839.
- Orme, Robert. *Historical Fragments of the Mughal Empire*, F. Wingrave, London, n.d.
- Parks, Fanny, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque During Four and Twenty Years in the East with Revelations of Life in the Zenana*, 2 vols., Pelham Richardson, London, 1850.
- Pelsaert, Francisco, *Jahangir's India: The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, translated by W.H. Moreland and P. Geyl, Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, Delhi, 1972. First published 1925.
- Polier, Antoine Louis Henri, *Shah Alam II and His Court: A Narrative of the Transactions at the Court of Delhy from the year 1771 to the Present Time*, edited by Pratul C. Gupta, S.C. Sarkar & Sons Ltd., Calcutta, 1947.
- Rickards, R., *India of Facts Submitted to Illustrate the Character and Condition of the Native Inhabitants*, Smith Elder, London, 1832.
- Roberts, Emma, *Hindustan: Its Landscapes, Palaces, Temples, Tombs*, 2 vols., Fisher, Son & Co., London, 1845.

Sen, Surendranath, ed., *Indian Travels of Theveno and Careri*, National Archives of India, Delhi, 1949.

Sleeman, W.H., *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*, edited by V.A. Smith, 2 vols., Archibald Constable and Company, Westminster, 1893.

Tavernier, Jean-Baptiste, *Travels in India*, translated by V. Ball, edited by William Crooke, 2 vols., Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, Delhi, 1989 (reprint).

Twining, Thomas, *Travels in India a Hundred Years Ago*, edited by William H.G. Twining, London, James R. Osgood, McIlvaine and Co., 1893.

Wakefield, W., *Our Life and Travels in India*, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, London, 1878.

Memoirs, Poems, Letters, Social and Literary Works.

Ahmad, Ali, *Twilight in Delhi*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1966.

Altaf Husain Hali, *Majalis-un-Nissa*, Maktaba Jamia, Delhi, 1993.

Amir Khusrau. *Qiran-us-Sadain*. edited by Muhammad Muqtada Khan Sherwani, introduction by Syed Hasan Burney, Matba Institute Aligarh College, Aligarh, 1918. First edition, 1885.

Basti, "Masnavi-i Basti", edited by Yunus Jaffery, in *Qand-i Parsi*, 1992, Iranian Culture House, Delhi.

Bihari, *Satsai*, English translation and introduction by Krishna P. Bahadur, Penguin, Delhi, 1990.

Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa-i Dehli*, translated and edited into English by Chander Shekhar and Shama Mitra Chenoy, Delhi, 1989; translated and edited into Urdu by Khaliq Anjum, Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu, Delhi, 1993.

Khushwant Singh, *Delhi — A Novel*, Penguin, Delhi, 1990.

Khwaja Syed Mir Asar, *Masnavi Khwab o Khayal*, edited by Maulavi Abdul Haq, Anjuman Urdu, Aurangabad, 1926.

Maheshwar Dayal, *Alam Mein Intekhab*, Urdu Academy, Delhi, 1987.

Maheshwar Dayal, *Rediscovering Delhi: The Story of Shahjahanabad*, S.Chand & Company, Delhi, 1982. First published 1975.

- Mir Inshaullah Khan "Insha", *Darya-i Latafat*, translated into Urdu by Brajmohan Dattareya "Kaifi" Dehlavi, edited by Abdul Haq, Anjuman Taraqqi, Delhi, 1988.
- Mir Taqi Mir, *Zikr-i Mir*, translated into Urdu by Nisar Ahmad Faruqi as *Mir Ki Ap Biti*, Maktaba Burhan, Delhi, 1957.
- Mirza Farahatullah Beg, *Dilli ki Aakhri Shama*, edited by Rashid Hasan Khan, Anjuman Taraqqi, Delhi, 1992.
- Mirza Hairat Dehlavi, *Chirag-i Dehli*, Urdu Academy, Delhi, 1987.
- Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan, *Khutoot*, translated and edited into Urdu by Khaliq Anjum, Maktaba Burhan, Delhi, 1989.
- Mirza Muhammad Hasan Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, translated into Urdu by Muhammad Umar, Maktaba Burhan, Delhi, 1968.
- Muhyuddin Hasan, *Dilli Ki Begmati Zaban*, Nai Awaaz, Delhi, 1976.
- Nazir Ahmad Dehlavi, *Banat-ul-Nash*, Matba Tejkumar, Lucknow, 1927.
- Nazir Ahmad Dehlavi, *Mirat-ul-Urus*, Urdu Academy, Lucknow, 1983.
- Nazir Ahmad Dehlavi, *Taubat-un-Nusuh*, Maktaba Jamia, Delhi, 1993.
- Rama Mehta, *Inside the Haveli*, Penguin, 1994. First published, 1977.
- Russell, Ralph and Islam, Khurshidul Islam, translated and edited, *Ghalib: 1797-1869: Life and Letters*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994.
- Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi, *Rasum-i Dehli*, edited by Khaliq Anjum, Urdu Akademi, Delhi, 1986.
- Sharma, Ramesh Chandra, "The Ardha-Kathanak, A Neglected Source of Mughal History", *Indica*, 7, 1970.
- Trilok Das, "Nadir Shah and Muhammad Shah", Hindi poem translated into English by William Irvine, in *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1897.
- William Dalrymple, *City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi*, Harper Collins, Delhi, 1993.
- Archaeological Reports and Gazetteer**
- Ahmad, Bashir al-Din, *Waqiat-i Dar al-Hukumat-i Dihli*, 3 vols., mimeo, Urdu Academy, Delhi, 1990. First edition, 1919.

Gazetteer of the Delhi District, 1883-4, compiled and published under the authority of the Punjab Government, Calcutta.

Hasan, Maulavi Zafar, compiled, Page, J.A., edited, Agrawal, R.C., introduction, *Monuments of Delhi: Lasting Splendour of the Great Mughals and Others*, Aryan Books International, Delhi, 1997. First published, 1916.

Khan, Sayyid Ahmad, *Asar al-Sanadid*, edited by Khaliq Anjum, 3 vols., Urdu Academy, Delhi, 1990.

Sharma, Y.D., *Delhi and Its Neighbourhood*, Archaeological Survey of India, Delhi, 1990 (reprint). First edition 1964.

Secondary Sources

Abu Logod, Janet L., 'The Islamic City — Historical Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 19, 1987.

Ahmad, Imtiaz, 'The Ashraf-Ajlaf Dichotomy in Muslim Structure in India', *Economic and Social History Review*, 3, 3, 1966.

Ahmad, Najma Perveen, *Hindustani Music: A Study of its Development in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Manohar, Delhi, 1984.

Alam, Muzaffar, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh, and Punjab, 1707-48*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 12, 1-2, 1986-87.

Ali, M. Athar, 'Recent Theories of Eighteenth Century India', *The Indian Historical Review*, 1989.

Ali, M. Athar, 'The Mughal Polity - A Critique of Revisionist Approaches', *Modern Asian Studies*, 27, 4, 1993.

Ali, M. Athar, 'The Passing of Empire: The Mughal Case', *Modern Asian Studies*, 9, 3, 1975.

Ali, M. Athar, 'Towards an Interpretation of the Mughal Empire', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1, 1978.

Ali, M. Athar, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966.

Ansari, M.A., *Social Life of the Mughal Emperors*, Shanti Prakashan, Delhi, 1974.

- Asher, Catherine B., *Architecture of Mughal India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.
- Ashraf, K.M., *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1970.
- Bailey, T.G., *A History of Urdu Literature*, Oxford University Press, London, 1932.
- Barnett, R., *North India Between Empires, Awadh, the Mughals and the British*, Berkley University Press, Berkley, 1980.
- Bayly, C.A., "Delhi and Other Cities of North India During the 'Twilight' ", in R.E. Frykenberg, ed., *Delhi Through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture, and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986.
- Bayly, C.A., *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1780-1870*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988. First published 1983.
- Beach, Milo Cleveland, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.
- Bearce, George D., 'Intellectual and Cultural Characteristics of India in a Changing Era, 1740-1800', *Journal of Asian Studies*, Nov. 1965.
- Bearce, George D., 'The Culture of Eighteenth Century India: A Reappraisal', *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 1961.
- Bearce, George D., *British Attitudes Towards India, 1784-1858*, Oxford University Press, London, 1961.
- Bhatty, Zarina, 'Socializing of the Female Muslim Child,' in Karuna Chanana, ed., *Socialization Education and Women: Explorations in Gender Identity*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1988.
- Blake, Stephen P., "Dar-ul-Khilafat-i-Shahjahanabad: The Padshahi Shahar in Mughal India, 1556-1739", Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1974.
- Blake, Stephen P., *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639-1739*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991.
- Braudel, Fernand, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century: The Structures of Everyday Life*, 3 vols., Fontana Press, London, 1988.

- Chandra, Satish, 'Cultural and Political Role of Delhi, 1675-1725', in R.E. Frykenberg, ed., *Delhi Through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture, and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986.
- Chandra, Satish, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court*, People's Publishing House, Delhi, 1979. First published 1959.
- Crooke, William, *The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, 2 vols., Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1978 (reprint). Second edition, 1896.
- Das, Veena, 'Feminity and the Orientation to the Body', in Karuna Chanana, ed., *Socialization Education and Women: Explorations in Gender Identity*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1988.
- Das Gupta, Ashin, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat: 1700-1750*, Franz Steiner Verlage, Weisbaden, 1979.
- Datta, K.K., *Survey of India's Social Life and Economic Conditions in the Eighteenth Century*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1978.
- Dube, Leela, 'On the Construction of Gender: Hindu Girls in Patrilineal India', in Karuna Chanana, ed., *Socialization Education and Women: Explorations in Gender Identity*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1988.
- Ennen, Edith, *The Medieval Town*, North-Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1979.
- Fanshawe, H.C., *Shahjahan's Delhi: Past and Present*, Sumit Publications, Delhi, 1979 (reprint). First published 1902.
- Fergusson, James, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, 2 vols., Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1967. First published 1910.
- Findly, Ellison Banks, *Nur Jahan: Empress of Mughal India*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993.
- Frykenberg, R.E., ed., *Delhi Through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture, and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986.
- Goetz, Hermann, 'The Qudsiya Bagh at Delhi: Key to Late Mughal Architecture', *Islamic Culture*, Jan., 1952.
- Goetz, Hermann, *The Crisis of the Indian Civilization in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1938.

- Grewal, J.S., *Medieval India: History and Historians*, Guru Nanak Dev University Press, Amritsar, 1975.
- Grunebaum, G. Von, 'The Structure of the Muslim Town', *Islam: Essays in the Native and Growth of a Cultural Tradition*, Memoir No.81, The American Anthropological Association, Ann Arbor, 1955, 2nd edition, London, 1961.
- Gupta, Narayani, *Delhi Between Two Empires, 1803-1931: Society, Government, and Urban Growth*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1981.
- Habib, Irfan, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India: 1556-1707*, Asia Publishing House, New York, 1963.
- Habib, Muhammad and Khan, Afsar Umar Salim, *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, (including a translation of Zia al-Din Barani's *Fatawa-i Jahandari*), Delhi, n.d.
- Hambly, Gavin, *Cities of Mughal India: Delhi, Agra, and Fatehpur Skiri*, Paul Elek, London, 1977.
- Haque, Ishrat, *Glimpses of Mughal Society and Culture: A Study Based on Urdu Literature in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century*, Concept Publishing Company, Delhi, 1990.
- Hasan, S. Nurul, 'The Morphology of a Medieval Indian City: A Case Study of Shahjahanabad in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 43rd Session, 1982.
- Irvine, William, *The Later Mughals*, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, Delhi, 1991.
- Islam, Khurshidul and Russell, Ralph, *Three Mughal Poets: Mir, Sauda, Mir Hasan*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991.
- Jacobson, Doranne, 'Purdah and the Hindu Family in Central India', in Hanna Papanek and Gail Minault (eds.). *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia*, Chanakya Publication, Delhi, 1982.
- Kaul, H.K., chosen and edited, *Historic Delhi: An Anthology*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1985.
- Kausar, Zinat, *Muslim Women in Medieval India*, Janaki Prakashan, Delhi, 1992.

- Khatri, Jyotirmaya, "Evolution and Structure of Holi: Towards An Understanding of the Social Mores of a Festival", M.Phil. dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, 1993.
- Kidwai, Salim, 'Sultans, Eunuchs, and Domestics.' in Utsa Patnaik and Manjari Dingwaney, ed., *Chains of Servitude: Bondage and Slavery in India*, Sangam Books, Delhi, 1985.
- Koch, Ebba, 'The Delhi of the Mughals Prior to Shahjahanabad as Reflected in the Patterns of Imperial Visits', in A.J. Qaisar and S.P. Verma, eds., *Art and Culture: Felicitation Volume in Honour of Professor S. Nurul Hasan*, Publication Scheme, Jaipur, 1993.
- Krafft, Thomas and Ehlers, Eckart, 'The Imperial Design and Military Security: The Changing Iconography of Shahjahanabad - Delhi', *Erkunde*, Band 49/1995.
- Lal, K.S., *The Mughal Harem*, Delhi, Aditya Prakashan, 1988.
- Lapidus, Ira Marvin, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1967.
- Malik, Z.U., 'Some Aspects of Mughal Culture During the First Half of the Eighteenth Century', *Studies in Islam*, Jan., 1965.
- Malik, Z.U., 'The Core and the Periphery: A Contribution to the Debate on the Eighteenth Century', *Social Scientists*, 18, 11-12, 1990.
- Malik, Z.U., *A Mughal Statesman of the Eighteenth Century: Khan-i Dauran, Mir Bakshi of Muhammad Shah*, Asia Publishing House, Delhi, 1973.
- Malik, Z.U., *The Reign of Muhammad Shah, 1719-1748*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1977.
- Manuel, Peter, *Thumri in Historical and Stylistic Perspectives*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1989.
- Metcalf, Barbara D., 'Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi and Urdu Literature', in Christopher Shackle, ed., *Urdu and Muslim South Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991.
- Metcalf, Barbara D., 'The Making of a Muslim Lady: Maulana Thanawi's *Bihishti Zewar*', in Milton Israel and N.K. Wagle, ed., *Islamic Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor Aziz Ahmad*, Manohar, Delhi, 1983.

- Minault, Gail, 'Begmati Zaban: Women's Language and Culture in Nineteenth Century,' *India International Quarterly*, 9, 2, Delhi, 1984.
- Minault, Gail, 'Hali's *Majalis-un-Nissa*: Purdah and Woman Power in Nineteenth Century India,' Milton Israel and N.K. Wagle, ed., *Islamic Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Prof. Aziz Ahmad*, Manohar, Delhi, 1983.
- Minault, Gail, 'Ismat: Rashid ul Khairi's Novels and Urdu Literary Journalism for Women', in Christopher Shackle, ed., *Urdu and Muslim South Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991.
- Minault, Gail, 'Other Voices, Other Rooms: The View from the *Zenana*', in Nita Kumar, ed., *Women as Subjects*, Stree, Delhi, 1994.
- Minault, Gail, *Voices of Silence* [English translation of Khwaja Altaf Husain Hali's *Majalis-un-Nissa* and *Chup ki Dad*], containing an introduction by the translator entitled 'Hali and Woman's Place in Late Nineteenth-Century India,' Chanakya Publications, Delhi, 1986.
- Mishra, Rekha, *Women in Mughal India*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1967.
- Muhammad, K.K., 'Bazaars in Mughal India: An Essay in Architectural Study and Interpretation', *Islamic Culture*, July, 1989.
- Muhammad, K.K., 'The Houses of the Nobility in Mughal India', *Islamic Culture*, July, 1986.
- Mujeeb, Muhammad, *The Indian Muslims*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1985. First published 1967.
- Mukhia, Harbans, 'Communalism and Indian Polity', *South Asia Bulletin*, 11, 1 & 2, 1991.
- Mukhia, Harbans, 'The Celebration of Failure as Dissent in Urdu *Ghazal*', *Modern Asian Studies* (forthcoming).
- Naim, C.M., 'The Art of the Urdu *Marsiya*', in Milton Israel and N.K. Wagle, ed., *Islamic Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor Aziz Ahmad*, Manohar, Delhi, 1983.
- Naim, C.M., 'Transvestic Words: The *Rekhti* in Urdu', mimeo.
- Naqvi, H.K., 'Shahjahanabad: The Mughal Delhi, 1638-1803: An Introduction', in R.E. Frykenberg, ed., *Delhi Through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986.

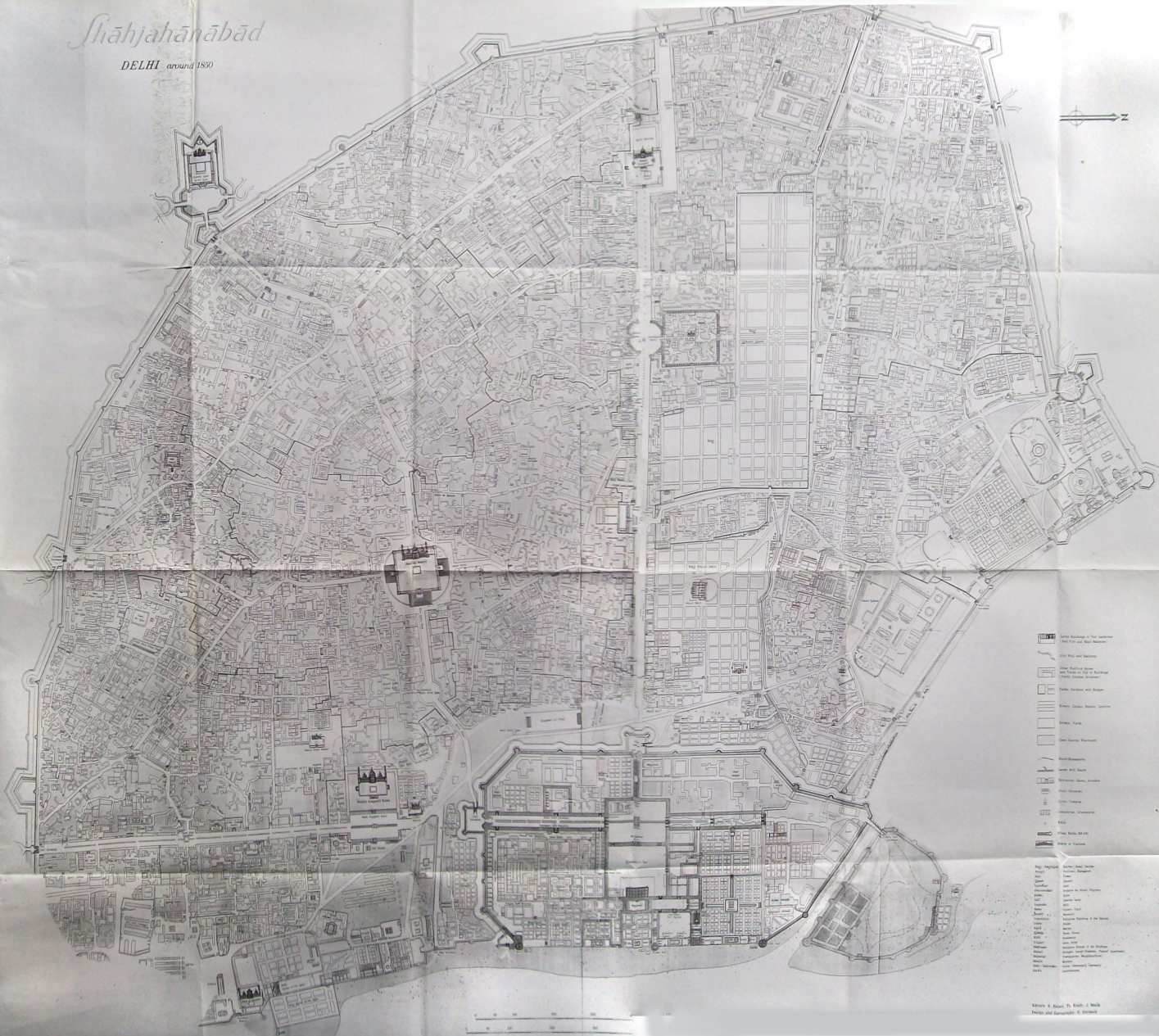
- Naqvi, H.K., *Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India 1556-1803*, Asia Publishing House, London, 1968.
- Naqvi, H.K., *Urbanisation and Urban Centres Under the Great Mughals*, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla, 1971.
- Noe, Samuel K., 'What Happened to Mughal Delhi: A Morphological Survey,' in R.E. Frykenberg, ed., *Delhi Through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture, and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986.
- Ojha, D.N., *Aristocracy in Medieval India*, Orient Publications, Delhi, 1993.
- Oldenburg, Veena Talwar, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow: 1856-1877*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989.
- Papanek, Hanna, 'Purdah: Separate Worlds and Symbolic Shelter', in Hanna Papanek and Gail Minault, eds., *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia*, Chanakya Publications, Delhi, 1982.
- Papanek, Hanna and Minault, Gail, eds., *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia*, Chanakya Publications, Delhi, 1982.
- Perlin, Frank, 'Proto-Industrialization and Pre-Colonial South Asia', *Past and Present*, 98, 1983.
- Perlin, Frank, 'State Formation Reconsidered', *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 3, 1985.
- Qureshi, I.H., *Akbar: The Architect of the Mughal Empire*, Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, Delhi, 1987 (reprint). First published, 1978.
- Raghuvanshi, V.P.S., *Indian Society in the Eighteenth Century*, Associated Publishing House, Delhi, 1969.
- Rao, Vidya, 'Thumri as Feminine Voice', *Economic and Political Weekly*, April, 28, 1990.
- Richards, J.F., *Power, Administration, and Finance in Mughal India*, Variorum, Aldershot, 1993.
- Richards, J.F., *The Mughal Empire*, Cambridge University Press, Delhi, 1993.
- Russell, Ralph, *Hidden in the Lute: An Anthology of Two Centuries of Urdu Literature*, Penguin (Viking), Delhi, 1995.
- Russell, Ralph, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992.

- Sadiq, Muhammad, *A History of Urdu Literature*, Oxford University Press, London, 1964.
- Sarkar, Jadunath, *The Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 4 vols., Orient Longman, Delhi, 1988-92 (Fourth edition).
- Sarkar, Jadunath, tr., *The India of Aurangzeb with Extracts from The Khulasat al-Tawarikh and the Chahar Gulshan*, Calcutta, 1902.
- Sarkar, Jagdish Narayan, *A Study of Eighteenth Century India*, Saraswat Library, Calcutta, 1976.
- Siddiqui, I.H., 'Historical Information in the Thirteenth Century Collection of Persian Poems', *Studies in Islam*, Jan/April, 1982.
- Spear, Percival, 'Mughal Delhi and Agra', in A. Toynbee, *Cities of Destiny*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1967.
- Spear, Percival, *Twilight of The Mughals*. Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1990.
- Stein, Burton, 'A Decade of Historical Efflorescence', *South Asia Research*, 10, 2, 1990.
- Stein, Burton, 'Arrested Development: But When and Where?' in Clive J. Dewey, ed., *Arrested Development in India: The Historical Dimension*, Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1988.
- Stein, Burton, 'Eighteenth Century India: Another View', *Studies in History*, 5, 1, 1989.
- Streusand, Douglas E., *The Formation of the Mughal Empire*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989.
- Suri, Pushpa, *Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century Northern India*, Delhi University Press, Delhi, 1977.
- Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, 4 vols., Publication Division, Delhi, 1965. First published 1961.
- Trivedi, Madhu, 'An Appraisal of the Musical Arts at Shahjahanabad During the First Half of the Eighteenth Century', in A.J. Qaisar and S.P. Verma (eds.) *Art and Culture: Felicitation Volume in Honour of Professor S. Nurul Hasan*, Publication Scheme, Jaipur, 1993.









- Troll, Christian W., ed., *Muslim Shrines in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992.
- Umar, Muhammad, 'Literature of a Declining Empire: Urdu Poetry in the Eighteenth Century', mimeo.
- Varma, Pavan, K. and Shankar, Sondeep, *Mansions at Dusk: The Havelis of Old Delhi*, Spantech Publishers, Delhi, 1992.
- Varma, Pavan K., *Ghalib: The Man, The Times*, Penguin, Delhi, 1992.
- Vatuk, Sylvia, 'Purdah Revisited: A Comparison of Hindu and Muslim Interpretations of the Cultural Meaning of Purdah in South Asia', in Hanna Papanek and Gail Minault, eds., *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia*, Chanakya Publications, Delhi, 1982.
- Washbrook, David, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics: The Madras Presidency, 1870-1920*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976.
- Wheatley, Paul, 'What the Greatness of a City is Said to Be', *Pacific Viewpoint*, 4, 1963.
- Wink, Andre, *Land and Sovereignty in India - Agrarian Society and Politics Under the Eighteenth Century Maratha Svarajya*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986.
- Urdu Works**
- Ahmad, Naim, *Shahr Ashob Ka Tahqiqi Mutala*, Adabi Academy, Aligarh, 1979.
- Hasan, Muhammad, *Delhi Mein Urdu Shairi ka Tahzibi aur Fikri Pas Manzar, 1707-1815*, Urdu Academy, Delhi, 1989.
- Intizar Mirza, ed., *Dilli Ki Tehzeeb*, Urdu Academy, Delhi, 1991.
- Nizami, K.A., *Auraq-i Musauwar*, University of Delhi, Delhi, 1972.
- Umar, *Atharvi Sadi Mein Hindustani Mashrat: Mir Ka Ahad*, Jama'i Millia Islamia, Delhi, 1973.

Shāhjahānābād

DELHI around 1850



-  Outer Fortification of the Garrison
-  City Wall and Bastions
-  Street
-  Mosque
-  Palace
-  Fort
-  Garden
-  Public Square
-  Courtyard
-  Mosque
-  Mosque
-  Mosque
-  Mosque
-  Mosque

-  Mosque
-  Mosque
-  Mosque
-  Mosque
-  Mosque
-  Mosque
-  Mosque
-  Mosque