

Guide to Delhi



Fort, Delhi.

To

My Revered Father

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED

IN

Grateful acknowledgment of his kindness

TO

The Author

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THE FORT, DELHI.

THE massive fort is situated on the right bank of the river Jumna on the eastern side of the city of Delhi not very far from Chandni Chowk. It is a huge red sand-stone building; its walls are mighty, surmounted here and there by fine towers with chochetons. The walls on the river side are 60 feet high but they increase to a height of 100 feet on the landside where further protection is afforded by a moat 75 feet deep.

The fort is 3,200 feet in length from north to south and 1,800 feet in width from east to west. In shape, the fort is an irregular octagon with a circumference of a mile and a half and having two long sides on the east and west and six short ones to north and south.

The fort was built by the famous Moghul Emperor Shahjahan and its construction was finished in ten years at an estimated cost of one crore of rupees. The fort was formerly the palace of Shahjahan and possessed great splendour and

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grandeur in his days. Bernier, Manucci, Fergusson and others had written sufficient on the excellence of the fort. According to Fergusson, 'this was the most magnificent palace in the East perhaps in the world'. But since the splendid days of Shahjahan, the fort, like other things underwent many vicissitudes; in 1719 it was greatly damaged by earthquake shocks; in 1739 the Persian invader, Nadir Shah carried off much of the palace treasure and precious decorations together with the world-renowned famous Peacock Throne; in 1759 serious havoc was wrought by Maratha assaults; in 1798 it was invaded by the Rohillas and finally, after the Mutiny of 1857, minor courts, connecting corridors, several buildings and gardens were demolished, and barracks built instead.

The fort though greatly reduced in size and splendour since the days of the Mutiny is worth a careful visit as it still possesses some remarkably interesting buildings—such as Diwan-i-Khas, Moti Masjid, Private Apartments, Hammam, Rangmahal and the Burj.

There are two principal gates to the fort—the Lahore Gate to the west facing Chandni Chowk and

the Delhi Gate to the south. The former has an archway forty feet in length and twenty-four in width and is flanked by towers crowned by pavilions; the latter is similar in construction to the former except for a stone elephant on the either side of the entrance set up by Lord Curzon to replace the originals destroyed by Aurangzeb. Besides the above two gates, there are three more of minor importance and particular interest attaches to one of these (the one leading to Salimgarh) through which His Majesty King George V passed when on his way to the Imperial Durbar of 1911.

Near the inner side of the Lahore Gate is the roofed arcade or arched vestibule. This is the famous Chhatta Chowk, or Covered Mart which was once the centre of the richest wares in the East. A little further stands the Naubatkhana or Imperial drum-house where an orchestra played with great pomp and splendour. Beyond this place, no one except the Emperor and princes of the blood were allowed to proceed mounted.

This fort, during the reign of Shahjahan and that of Aurangzeb was known as Kila-i-Mubarak (fortunate citadel) and Kila-i-Shahjahanabad;

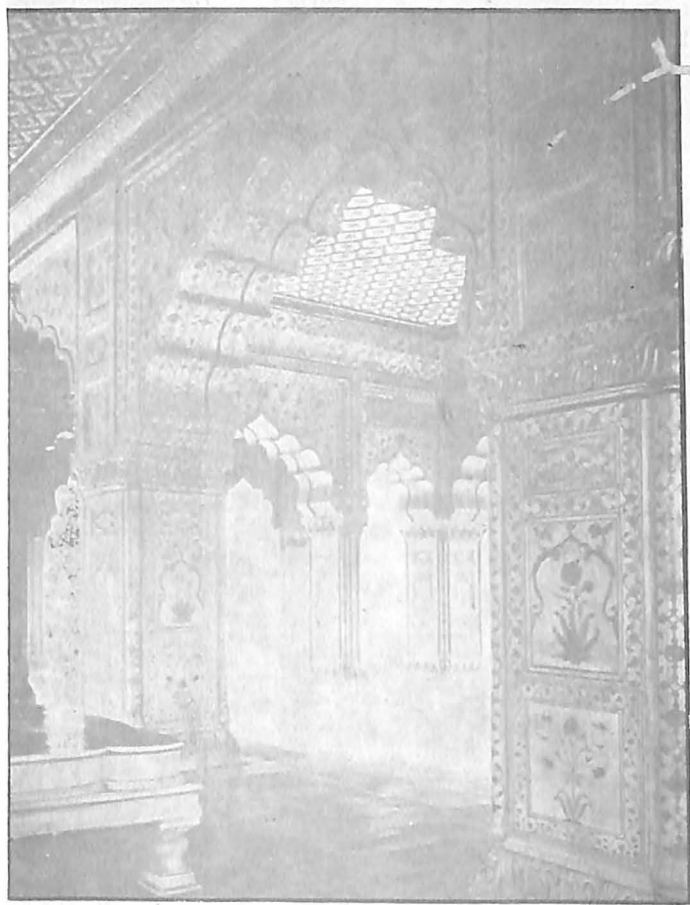
under Bahadur Shah, the last Moghul Emperor, it was called Kila-i-Maula (exalted fortress) and today it is styled Lal Kila (Red Fort).

DIWAN-I-AM

Diwan-i-Am stands near the Naubatkhana and literally means the Hall of Public Audience or the Durbar Hall. It originally formed the main building of the palace being 500 feet long and 300 feet wide. It consists of a large hall supported by red sandstone pillars and enclosed by arcaded cloisters brilliantly gilt and decorated with brightly painted shell-plaster.

Facing the hall, a few feet above floor level the main wall opens to display a white marble recess 90 feet wide, protected by an elaborately carved marble balustrade, this was known as Nashiman-i-zill-illahi or the seat of the shadow of God but more commonly known as Jharokha (Emperor's sitting place—throne). Here the great Moghul sat daily for a couple of hours in the Durbar hall, heard the humblest of his subjects and personally dispensed justice to all. Below the throne is a marble dias where the Moghal ministers used to sit.

Guide to Delhi



Diwan-i-Khas, Fort.

DIWAN-I-KHAS

The Diwan-i-Khas or the Hall of Special Audience adjacent to the Khas-Mahal is a magnificent pavilion of white marble standing on a raised platform. Its flat roof is supported by engrailed arches and the central apartment by thirty-two richly carved pillars inlaid with precious gems. On the cornices at either end an inscription is engraved in Persian which when translated means "If Paradise be on Earth, it is this, it is this, it is this". One of the chief glories of the chamber was its well-adorned ceiling richly overlaid with gold and almost entirely covered by raised gold and silver foliage. This was visited by Tavernier, the French traveller who estimated them worth twenty-seven million francs. Lt. Col. Forrest visiting the palace in 1820 remarked, "in the centre was the throne on which the Emperor sat and near it was a block of purest crystal, 4 feet long and 3 feet wide and 2 feet deep, the most beautiful stone ever seen".

It was here that the celebrated Peacock Throne of world-wide fame was placed. According to Badshahnama, this throne was prepared by

Shahjahan. It took over seven years to complete and cost a very handsome amount. A little account of the throne will interest our readers. It was called the Peacock Throne from its having the figures of two peacocks of solid gold so blended with sapphires, rubies, emeralds, pearls and other priceless stones of appropriate colours that they almost correctly depicted living birds. The throne itself was 6 feet long and 4 feet wide; it stood on six massive feet made of solid gold inlaid with diamonds, emeralds and rubies. It was surmounted by a canopy of gold supported by twelve emerald pillars and a fringe of pearls ornamented the borders. Further wonders were a tree of jewels and a parrot carved out of a single emerald. Its estimated value was six and a half million pounds sterling having jewels worth not less than eighty lakhs of rupees with one ruby alone worth a lakh of rupees. This magnificent throne was carried off to Persia by Nadir Shah as loot during his invasion of India on 9th February 1739 and was last heard of in Teheran where presumably most of it was melted down. The wonderful ceiling of the audience chamber was looted by the Marathas in 1760, and melted down.

It was to Diwan-i-Khas that the Emperor Shahjahan used to retire after his mid-day Durbar to discuss confidential affairs with a privileged few. Here, too, he held his court every evening. Fergusson remarked "it is, if not the most beautiful, certainly the most highly ornamented of all Shahjahan's buildings." The interior decoration of the Diwan-i-Khas with its past glories must have been one of the world's greatest wonders. Though much has long since departed, still the exquisite pavilion standing to this day is a miracle of mosaic carving and delicate tracery.

MOTI MASJID

Almost adjoining the Diwan-i-Khas is the exquisite Moti Masjid or the Pearl Mosque. It was built by Aurangzeb, the successor to Shahjahan, in 1657 and was his private house of worship. The mosque is extremely beautiful, built of white marble and standing with a courtyard enclosed by red sandstone walls. The mosque is 40 feet by 30 feet and stands on a plinth $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height. Entrance to it is made through small brass gates of handsome design. The original domes were of heavily gilt copper which were destroyed by gun-

shots during the Mutiny. Formerly, the interior of the mosque was highly decorated but now, like the fate of other buildings, most of its glories have departed, but still the mosque stands with its symmetrical domes of pure white, a gem of architecture.

KHAS-MAHAL

Not very far from the Diwan-i-Khas is Khas-Mahal, the Emperor's Private Apartments. These consist of the Tashbih Khana or the house for worship by the telling of beads, the Khwabgah or place of dreams and the Baithak or place of social intercourse also called Tosh Khana or wardrobe.

The Khwabgah as the name implies was the sleeping place of the Emperor and consisted of a suite of three rooms, the walls being inlaid with precious stones and further ornamented by beautifully carved screens and inscriptions. Count Von Orlich who visited the imperial bed-room in 1843 greatly admired the excellence of this place. According to the admirable suggestion of Mr. W. H. Hailey, once the Commissioner of Delhi, two rooms of the Emperor's private apartments have been re-furnished in Moghul style exactly as they

must have been in olden days. The Baithak and the Tashbih Khana were also adorned with the most beautiful of carved marble work richly inlaid with precious stones. Near the Khwabgah is a most beautiful marble screen inscribed with the 'Scale of Justice' at the top.

OTHER FORT BUILDINGS

Other objects of interest in the fort are the Saman Burj, the Rang Mahal and the 'Hammam' (bath). The Saman Burj is a projecting marble pavilion overlooking the river-bank below the eastern wall of the Khawbgah. Formerly, it was styled as Burj-Tila or Golden Tower from the fact that its cupola was sheeted with heavily gilt copper. In Moghul times, it was here that the Emperor came at dawn to salute the rising Sun and in turn receive the salutation of his subjects.

On the eastern side of the Diwan-i-Khas is Rang Mahal or the Palace of Colours named after the brilliance of the colours with which it was formerly adorned. This building measuring 153 feet by 69 feet was once sacred to the imperial seraglio. It is mainly composed of white marble, although the outward appearance of the structure is somewhat

sombre in character, the interior is conspicuous with its five marble dadoes and gilded ceilings and summits of arches. In the gorgeous days of Shahjahan, the ceiling was of silver overlaid with flowers in gold and the Rang Mahal was styled Imtiyaz Mahal or palace of distinction. But under Furrukhsiyar gold and silver were stripped and melted down. The superbly carved screens, of the five great windows in the eastern wall of the Rang Mahal overlooking the river are its special features. It was from here that the Princesses and Begums and Ladies of the court watched the elephant fights and wild beast shows in the arena below. Near the Rang Mahal lies a lotus fountain. Also, there is a site underneath the Rang Mahal which is held to be the tunnels which lead to Agra and Lahore.

On the eastern side of the Moti Masjid and not far from Diwan-i-Khas is the Hamman or Turkish baths. These are three main apartments together with two small rooms at either side which are said to have been baths for the imperial children. All are beautifully lined with marble inlaid with precious stones. The first room was a dressing room, second was a central basin for hot, or cold water and the

third was exclusively devoted to hot baths. The heating apparatus is built into the west wall. In the Hammam, the lotus fountain bath is of interest.

Besides the above, there are some more buildings worthy of mention. The "Sawan" is a water pavilion (named after the first month of the rainy season corresponding to July and August). In the niches around the tank and behind the cascade lighted tapers were set in the night and flowers in vases by day. It was very pleasant to witness the fall of the water in the niches. Another water pavilion is "Bhadon" (named after the second month of the rainy season, corresponding to August and September). Between the two lies the Jal Mahal—a beautiful building in the centre of a tank. Opposite to it and adjoining Hammam is a small structure—the Barah-Dari otherwise Hira Mahal where the Emperor used to enjoy the river scene. Next is Shah's Burj or King's Tower. All these sites are situated in the Hiyat Buksh garden.

FORT MUSEUM

There are two museums in the Fort, the Indian War Memorial and the Delhi Museum. The former lies just above the Naubatkhana Gate and

is approached by a flight of a few steps. Here, arms and ammunition, pictures and photos, stamps, curios and many other things may be seen. The latter stands about 30 yards from Rang Mahal in the eastern side. It was formerly Mumtaz Mahal, one of the best portions of the palace connected with other buildings by means of arcades. Since the Moghul days, it had been used as a military prison and sergeants' mess but now it is used as a museum where specimens of old manuscripts, dresses, pictures, swords and archeological monuments etc. are exhibited. The two museums are closed a quarter of an hour before the advertised time.

For the sake of convenience, I will suggest to my readers to visit the Fort buildings in the following order one after the other, the Indian War Memorial Museum, Diwan-i-Am, Delhi Museum, Rang Mahal, Khas Mahal, Diwan-i-Khas, Hammam, Moti Masjid, Hira Mahal, Shah Burj or King's Tower, Sawan, Jal Mahal and Bhadon.

ADMISSION TO THE FORT.

Hours of admission in the cold weather (October 16th to April 15th) are 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.

and 3 P.M. to retreat and in the hot weather (April 16th to October 15th) 7 A.M. to 10 A.M. and 4 P.M. to retreat.

KOH-I-NUR.

"The Mountain of Light"

This is the well-known and most precious gem the world possesses. It is the original product of the world famous Golconda Mines, India. Its history is very old. It is held that this was firstly with Kama, a hero who was slain in the Pandava war of Mahabharat (3000 B.C.). It has passed through many hands. From the last Hindu King, the Raja of Ujjain, Bikramaditya, it passed into the hands of the invading Muslims. It was again taken by the Gwalior Raja. But when he fell at Panipat, Humayun, the Moghul, was greeted by the widow of the Gwalior King, deceased, who presented the precious diamond alone with other jewels.

Baber writes in his memoirs thus, "It (Koh-i-Noor) is so valuable that a judge of diamonds valued it at half of the daily expenses of the world. It weighs eight miskals (320 rattis). On my arrival here, Humayun presented it to me as a Peshkash, and I gave it back to him as a present". This remained with the Moghul Emperors until the last King of the line, Mohamad Shah was defeated by Nadir Shah (1739). Mohamad Shah wore it in his turban and went to meet the con-

queror. Nadir Shah's attention was soon directed to the glitter of the unparalleled jewel; he said, "we will be friends and change our turbans in pledge of friendship". His son, Shah Rukh lost it, with all besides, to Ahmad Shah Durrani. The last king of the line, Shah Shuja was made a captive by Maharaja Ranjit Singh to whom he handed over the jewel. On the conquest of the Punjab by the British and the abdication of Maharaja Dalip Singh in 1849, the gem passed into the hands of the British. For some time it remained with Lord Lawrence who kept it carelessly in his pocket. In 1850, the Governor General, the Marquis of Dalhousie sent the diamond to the Board of Directors in England; and on July 3, 1850, it was presented to Her Majesty the Queen. It was exhibited at the first great exhibition in London in 1851. It was recut in London at a cost of £8,000 by Messrs. Garrad. The actual cutting lasted 38 days and reduced the diamond to 106 $\frac{1}{16}$ carats and it adorns the British Crown.

The glass model of the matchless diamond is seen in India in the Lahore Museum which was presented by the makers to the Punjab Exhibition.

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Delhi

The Imperial City

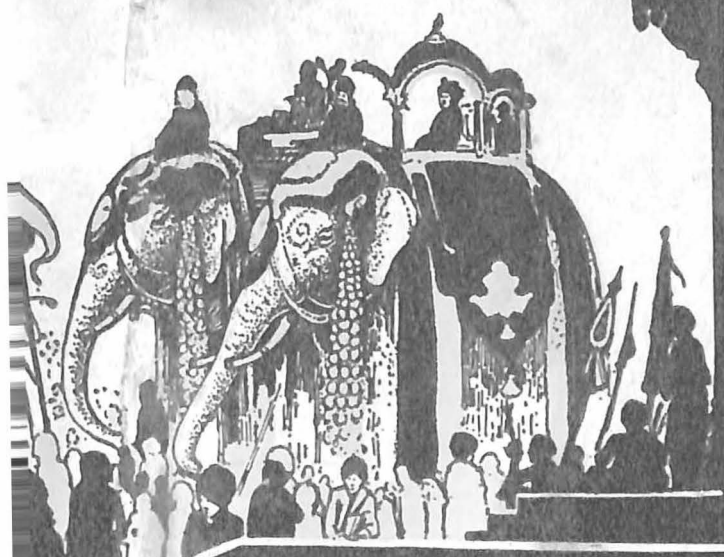
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