CHAPTER - 2
GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES :

SITUATION :

National Capital Territory of Delhi is located in Northern India between the latitudes of 28°-24’-17” and 28°-53’-00” north and longitudes of 76°-50’-24” and 77°-20’-37” east. It is spread over an area of 1483 sq km., of which 558.32 sq km is designated rural and 924.68 sq km is urban. It has a maximum length of 51.90 kms. and greatest width of 48.48 kms. It bordered to the south, west and north by Haryana, to the east, the part of boundary with Uttar Pradesh is formed by the river Yamuna. During the decade, although no change has taken place in the boundaries of Delhi, some change has taken place in its administrative set up. Following the passage of sixty ninth amendments to the constitution, the nomenclature of Delhi has exchanged to National Capital Territory of Delhi with effect from 1 February 1992. Delhi remained a uni- district territory of Delhi has been divided into 9 districts viz. North, North-West, South, South-West, East, North-East, West, Central, New Delhi and its 2 tahsils into 27 tahsils in 1997 [03 tahsils in each district] as shown in the Map 2.1.

PHYSIOGRAPHIC FEATURES :

Two natural features of the city probably made it a favourite place
for various rulers, the Ridge and River Yamuna. The former providing natural protection, and the latter a perennial source of water right at the gateway to the vast Indo-Gangetic plains. The various cities of Delhi through the ages have been cradled by these two features. Neither of them have been transgressed. Today, when their physical protective features are no longer of importance they are destroyed with impunity. Large portions of the Ridge have been blasted to colonise post independence refugees, while the Yamuna is now merely a drain, tapped much before it trickles into the capital. Map 2.2 shows the physiographic features of NCT- Delhi.

The area under Delhi consists of the ridge and its forest, undulating surfaces, plains and flood plains, the Najafgarh drain and the River Yamuna. Further, the distinct physiographic units of NCT of Delhi are :

1. Kohi (Ridge)
2. Dabar (Basin Area)
3. Banger (Upper alluvial plain)
4. Old Khadar (Old flood plain)
5. New Khadar (New flood plain)

The Ridge is a part of the Aravalli range which enters Delhi from the south, forking into two and expanding into a wide tableland. One part stems from Mehrauli to the bank of the Yamuna, while the other passes by the historic Tuglakabad fort to culminate at present day South Delhi. The Ridge forms the principal watershed in the area, the eastern drainage passing into the Yamuna and the western into Najafgarh basin. The width of the ridge varies from 50-100 meters at Wazirabad to as
wide as 2.5 km near Chanakyapuri. The higher elevation of ridge going upto 250 m above mean sea level and is about 15 to 20 m above the surrounding plains. A detached portion of rocky relief is in North West Delhi.

The area of the ridge is no longer the majestic forested spur that Tuglak saw. In fact it consists of four relatively small pockets of forests. The total area now available in the ridge is 7777 ha as evident from the table below:

Table: 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Ridge Area in NCT Delhi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Northern Ridge (Delhi University)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. South Central Ridge (Vasant Kunj)</td>
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<td>3. Central Ridge (Dhaula kuan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Southern Ridge (Asola Sanctuary)</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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(Source: Master Plan of Delhi 2021, Ministry of Urban Development)

In 1912, when Delhi became the capital of British India, the ridge was declared a reserve forest under the Indian Forest Act, 1913. The central ridge obtained a similar status in 1942. Due to rapid urbanization and increasing pressure on land, during 1920-30 a major portion of the ridge near Delhi University was blasted away to connect residential and business enterprises and to provide access to a high income residential colony of Karol Baugh. However, in 1980, the Northern and southern ridge were again declared reserved forests. At present only
two segments (greatly diminished over time) remain a green buffers: the Northern Ridge and the Central Ridge.

The area lying between the Ridge and the Yamuna flood plain, is a basin in west Delhi (also known as Dabar). The area is drier than the rest of the state with evidence of wind erosion and deposition such as deflation hollows and dunes. A low-lying tract near village Gumanhara, close to the border of Haryana, is a lacustrine basin. The Najafgarh Drain, flows in a North-east direction and joins the Yamuna near Wazirabad. The drain reportedly covered an area of 22,663 ha and was 4.2 mts deep a century ago, it has been drained and cultivated since 1940.

Banger, or the upper alluvial plain, composed of older fluvial deposits spread in the north-western section of the state, is more elevated and drier than the Khadar.

The Old Khadar, or the lower alluvial plain, is adjacent to the new khadar on the west of Yamuna and is broken into northern and southern sections by an extention of Ridge. The uneven terrain prone to floods, has remnants of fluvial features such as ox-bow lakes, meander cores, swamps and marshes.

New khaddar or the current flood plain is a low-lying area with recent river deposits. It forms a narrow strip along the west bank and a wider belt adjoining the east of river Yamuna. It is characterized by wide silt, which is broken by hollows holding standing water.
GEOLOGY:

The geological formations of NCT Delhi date from the Proterozoic to the Quarternary ages. The generalized succession of the rock formations reported are the Quarternary era represented by recent soils, alluvium, blow sand and nodular limestone; pegamites and the basic intrusives belonging to post Delhi intrusives; and the Alwar quartzites of the Delhi system. The area is a part of the Indo-Gangetic plain. Map 2.3 shows the geological map of NCT-Delhi.

The greatest part of Delhi lies in the alluvium, but the small hills and ridges in and around New Delhi consist of Alwar quartzites. Delhi area is occupied by quartzites interbedded with mica schist belonging to the Delhi Super Group, unconformably overlain by unconsolidated Quarternary to recent sediments. The quartzites are grey to brownish grey, massive to thinly bedded and structurally from a coaxially re-folded regional antiform plugging towards southwest. The major planar structure strikes NE-SW with steep southeasterly dips. These quartzites occur in the central and southern part of the area while the Quarternary sediments comprising older and newer alluvium cover the rest of the area. The older alluvium comprises silt, clay with minor lenticular fine sand and kankar beds. The newer alluvium mainly consists of unoxidised sands, silts and clay occurring in the older and active flood plains of Yamuna River. The thickness of alluvium, both on the eastern and western side of the ridge, is variable, but it is generally larger to the west of the ridge.
CLIMATE:

“Climate in a narrow sense is usually defined as the “average weather” or more rigorously, as the statistical description in terms of the mean and variability or relevant quantities over a period of time ranging from months to thousands or millions of years. The classical period is 30 years, as defined by World Meteorological Organization (WMO). These quantities are most often surface variables such as temperature, precipitation, and wind. Climate in a wider sense is the state, including a statistical description, of the climate system.”

The climatic regime of Delhi Falls under the semi arid type, influenced by the considerable distance of the city from the sea and prevalence of continental winds during major portion of the year. Extreme dryness with hot summers and cold winters are characteristics of the climate. The Government Meteorological Department of India is adopted a more convenient division –

[a] The season of north-east monsoon.
   [i] January and February, the cold weather season.
   [ii] March to mid June, hot weather season.

[b] The season of south west monsoon.
   [i] Mid June of mid September, season of general rains.
   [ii] Mid September to December, season of retreating monsoon.

But the year is popularly divided into three seasons —

1. The cold season — [lasting from October to March]
2. The hot season - [from March to June]
3. The rainy season - [from June to October]

The cold weather season:

The cold weather season starts towards the later half of November when both day and night temperature drop rapidly with the advance of the season. Due to Delhi’s proximity to Himalayas, cold waves from the Himalayan region dip temperatures across the city Delhi is notorious for its heavy fog during the winter season. In December reduced visibility leads to disruption of road, air and rail traffic. January is the coldest and beautifully fine month with the mean daily maximum temperature at 21.3°C and the mean daily minimum temperature at 7.3°C.

The hot weather season:

This is followed by the hot season starting in March, which lasts till about the end of June when the monsoon arrives. Dreadful summers witness the temperatures shooting to about 47°C. Weather in Delhi during the summer months experience high temperature with occasional dust storms during the day but it is comparatively cooler at nights. During the summers the suspended particulate matter present in air, the level of pollution and the exhaust forked out from vehicles makes the environment more terrible. The heat waves during the summer months are immense and the dwellers of Delhi have to take adequate to avoid dehydration and sunstroke in the hot afternoons. During the summer season, the city faces extreme power and water shortages. Many people die every year owing to the summer heat waves. May and June are the
hottest months with the mean daily maximum temperature 39.6°C and the mean daily minimum temperature 28.3°C. While day temperatures are higher in May the nights are warmer in June. From April the hot wind known locally as ‘looh’ blows and the weather is unpleasant.

The rainy season:

Delhi weather is usually dry leaving out the monsoon that arrives at the end of June. The South West summer monsoon, a four month period when massive convective thunderstorms dominate India’s weather, is earth’s most valuable wet season. It results from the south east trade winds originating from a high pressure mass centered over the southern Indian Ocean; attracted by a low pressure region centered over South Asia, it gives rise to surface winds that ferry humid air from the south west. These inflows ultimately result from a northward shift of the local jet stream, which itself results from rising summer temperatures over Tibet and the Indian subcontinent. The void left by the jet stream, which switches from a route just south of the Himalayas to one tracking north of Tibet, then attracts warm, humid air. The main factor behind this shift is the high summer temperature difference between Central Asia and the Indian Ocean.

The southwest monsoon arrives in two branches; The Bay of Bengal branch and the Arabian Sea branch. The latter extends towards a low pressure area over the Thar Desert and is roughly three times stronger than the Bay of Bengal branch. The average date of the advent of Monsoon winds in NCT of Delhi by 29 June, it is very moderate and
rains heavily in very short spells. Relative humidity is very high to the point where it becomes uncomfortable. The western disturbances too bring a fair amount of rainfall. Delhi finds 672.9 mm rainfall during the period of June to September in the year of 2007. In the history of Delhi, the lowest ratio of rainfall is recorded in 1987 that was 237.4 mm and the maximum rain was recorded 1155.1 mm in 1975.

EVOLUTION OF DELHI:

The etymology of “Delhi” is uncertain. The most common view is that it is an eponym of “Dhillu”, a king who ruled the area in ancient times. Raja Dhillu (king Dillu) founded ancient Delhi in 800 BC. Some historians believe that the name is derived from Dilli, a corruption of dehali-Hindustani for “threshold”-and symbolic of city as a gateway to the Indo-Gangetic Plain. Another theory suggests that the city’s original name was Dhillika. The Hindi word dhilli (“loose”) was also used for the area and gradually transformed into the local name “Dilli”.

The Indian capital city of Delhi has a long history, including a history as the capital of several empires. The earliest architectural relics date back to the Maurya period (c. 300 BC); since then, the site has seen continuous settlement. In 1966, an inscription of the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka (273-236 BC) was discovered near Srinivasapuri, which is near Noida. Two sandstone pillars inscribed with the edicts of Ashoka were brought to the city by Firuz Shah Tughlaq in the 14th century. The famous iron pillar near the Qutab Minar was commissioned by the emperor Kumar Gupta I of the Gupta dynasty (320-540) and transplanted
to Delhi during the 10th century. Eight major cities have been situated in the Delhi area. The first four cities were in the southern part of present day Delhi.

The major city contains the remnants of seven successive ancient cities including:

1. Qila Rai Pithora built by Prithvi Raj Chauhan, near the oldest Rajput settlement in Lal Kot;
2. Siri, built by Allauddin Khilji in 1303;
3. Tughluqabad, built by Ghiyasuddin Tughluq (1321-1325);
4. Jahanpanah, built by Muhammad bin Tughluq (1325-1351);
5. Kotla Firoz Shah, built by Firuz Shah Tugluq (1351-1388);
6. Purana Qila, built by Sher Shah Suri and Dinpanah built by Humayun, both in the area near the speculated site of the legendary Indraprastha (1538-1545);
7. Shahjahanabad, built by Shah Jahan from 1638 to 1649, containing the Lal Qila and the Chandni Chowk.

THE ANCIENT DELHI:

Traditionally Delhi’s history is traced back to the Mahabharata; an epic war fought nearly 5000 BC, between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, the two sons of Dhritrashtra and Pandu, descendants of Bharata. The Pandavas capital Indraprastha was built on the ruins of Khandavaparastha, the earliest and original Delhi, from where Puruavas, Nahusha and Yayati, the ancestors of the Pandavas and the Kauravas ruled the kingdom for centuries. Thus Khandavaprastha can be said the
original Delhi. The Pandava rebuilt and renamed it as Indraprastha. Archaeological evidence suggests that Indraprastha once stood where the Purana Qila is today.

Archaeologically it was Hindu Tomar king Anangpal, who first founded Delhi in 1060, and was known as Lal Kot near the Qutub Minar (Map 2.4). The Prithviraj Raso names the Rajput King Anangpal, as the first founder of Lal Kot. Anangpal is believed to be a lineal descendant of Yudhishthra. Later Prithviraj Chauhan, the Chauhan Rajput King of Ajmer conquered Lal Kot in 1180 and renamed it Quila Rai Pithora (Map 2.4) and was between present day Qutab Minar and Suraj Kund (Now in Haryana). He and his predecessor had also built many magnificent temples, which were later demolished by the invading Muslim conquerors. The chauhan king Prithviraj III was defeated in 1192 by the Afgan Mohammad Ghori. With the exit of Prithviraj Chauhan from the scene, an epoch ended.

**MEDIEVAL DELHI:**

A new era dawned with capture of Delhi by Qutbuddin Aibak, a slave turned sultan. Aibak occupied the Qila, completed the mosque Quwwat-Ul-Islam in 1198, and then laid the foundation of Qutab Minar in the following year.

With the coming of Feroz Shah, a Turk of Khilji Tribe, on the throne of Delhi, the rule of Khilji dynasty began. The third khilji king Alauddin succeeded the throne 1296. He is well known both for his political conquests and architectural ambition. He founded the second
city of Delhi called Siri in 1303 (Map 2.4). Some ruins of the city Siri have survived the devastations of all consuming time, and can be found near the present day Hauz Khas.

Next came the Tuglaqs, Ghiyasud-Din-Tughlak, and the founder of Tughlak dynasty, captured the throne in 1320 and built Tughalakabad, a few kilometers south-east of Qutab Minar (Map 2.4). Muhammad Shah Tughlak began to build the fourth Delhi called Jahanpanah (Map 2.4), by raising a walled enclosure between Qila Rai Pithora and Siri, however, Tughlakabad continued the capital to Daultabad in the Deccan, but being not successful in his attempt, he had to come back to Tughlakabad and the unfinished Jahanpanah.

Feroz Shah Tughlak succeeded him 1351, who shifted his swat of Government northwards closer to the river Yamuna and laid down many beautiful gardens and monuments, and also built Ferozabad the fifth Delhi. He also maintained and repaired the already existing structures in Qutab complex. The ruins near Delhi Gate called Feroz Shah Kotla, than formed the nucleus of the fifth Delhi. Its remains still contain an Ashoka Pillar and mosque where Tamoorlang prayed during his invasion of Delhi. The Ashoka Pillar was brought for the embellishment of the new founded city from a 12 mile distant village, Topra on 42 bullock carts drawn by as many as 8400 men, With each cart where 200 men to pull it to the destination.

The Tughlaks were succeeded by Sayyads and Lodis. They built many tombs and monuments, but resisted the temptation of founding a New Delhi. Sikander Lodi finally shifted his capital to Agra in 1504.
From then onwards till the 17th century, Agra and Delhi alternated as the seat of government.

**THE MUGHAL DELHI:**

In 1526, Zahiruddin Babar, the former ruler of Fergana, defeated the last Lodi sultan at Panipat, and founded the Mughal dynasty which ruled from Delhi, Agra and Lahore, but died soon after in 1530, without consolidating his kingdom. His son Humanyun succeeded him and founded another Delhi and baptized it as Dinpanah. It was near the present day India Gate and the National Stadium at the site of Purana Qila. In 1540 Sher Shah Suri, an afghan ruler and adventurer captured Dinpanah and forced Humanyun to flee to Afghanistan and Persia. Sher Shah Suri built the sixth city of Delhi, as well as the old fort known as Purana Qila and the Grand Trunk Road. After Sher Shah Suri’s early death, Humayun recovered the throne with Persian help.

The third and greatest Mughal emperor, Akbar, moved the capital to Agra, as the seat of his government, resulting in a decline in the fortunes of Delhi. His son Jahangir also stuck to Agra. In the mid-seventeenth century, the Jahangir’s son Shah Jahan (1628-1658) continued to rule from Agra for 11 years but then he felt Agra to be too hot and stifling and decided for Delhi in 1639, that sometimes bears his name Shahjahanabad, the seventh city of Delhi that is more commonly known as the old city or Old Delhi. Ironically enough, Sikander Lodi had shifted to Agra from Delhi, as he found Delhi oppressive and hot.

The foundation of the Red Fort or Urdu-I-Mulla, as it was then
called was laid in 1639 and was completed by year 1648. With it also came into being, on the rocky right bank of Yamuna, the new capital of Shahjahanabad. The population of Shahjahanabad grew and declined with the fortunes of its kings. In the beginning its population was about 60,000, which steadily rose to 2 lakhs in the time of Aurangzeb. But it was miserably reduced following Nadir Shah’s massacre. It was built in the shape of an elongated semicircle or a bow, with the Yamuna forming the bow-string. This was the seventh Delhi, which still thrives in the busy narrow lanes of Chandni Chowk and the pulsating areas surrounding the famous Jama Masjid. Aurangzeb (1658-1707) crowned himself as emperor in Delhi in 1658 at the Shalimar garden (Aizzabad-Bagh) with a second coronation in 1659. In 1761, Delhi was raided by Ahmed Shah Abdali after the Third battle of Panipat. The whole area of old Delhi is imbued with the rich historical memories of the past, which come to vivid and the vibrant life when a person conversant with them happens to visit the area. Every stone has a tale to tell and a message to give inscribed by history.

THE IMPERIAL DELHI:

The popular uprising and upheaval of 1857 has erroneously been called a mutiny. As a matter of fact, it was not confined to the ranks of army. It was a national movement for freedom, the first of its kind in India. The revolt of 1857 made the British realise the strategic importance of Delhi. The rebelling Indians declared the last Mughal king, Bahadur Shah Zafar, as their leader. But before long the rebellion was
totally crushed and Bahadur Shah was exiled to Rangoon, in Burma and his sons butchered.

Finally, in 1911 the British shifted their capital to Delhi from Calcutta. The same year the foundation stones of New Delhi where laid by King George V to the North of Old Delhi, the eight city. But it was found to be a bad site, and the stones were exhumed and brought to the new place. The chief British architect Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens and the viceroy Lord Harding finally compromised between European Renaissance and oriental styles and a capital was built. It was inaugurated in 1931, but by that time the sun of British rule in India was about to set. Just 16 years after this inauguration, India got independence, and the new capital city was handed over to the Indian representatives.

MODERN DELHI:

In the six decades since the creation of New Delhi as the capital of British India, the city has undergone a sea change. Made initially to cater to a population 70,000, the total urban population of Delhi now exceeds eight million.

The city has exploded in all directions beyond the confines of Lutyens’s wide, tree lined avenues, with an exuberance that is characteristically Indian. Several factors have contributed to this breathless pace of growth. For North India, especially Independence also meant partition.

In 1947, many Muslim families of Delhi migrated to Pakistan while many Hindus and Sikhs from West Punjab sought refuge in the
city. They were given land West of the Ridge and South of New Delhi. Many of these refugees, also have their houses across the Yamuna and north of Shahjahanabad. Since, then, the influx into the city hasn’t ceased. The man power required by the government in the capital is itself staggering.

Industrialists, entrepreneurs and migrant labor from all over India have turned to Delhi in search of livelihood and success, and made it a commercial capital as well. The cultivated fields which till recently could be seen on the outskirts of the city, have been developed into residential colonies and commercial complexes. Highrise buildings now stand cheek-by-jowl with Delhi’s 1300 monuments. Villagers such as khirkee, Begumpur, Hauzkhas, Sheikh Sarai and Nizamuddin which grow around medieval Delhi’s shifting capital cities, have now been engulfed by the urban sprawl. Many of them, however, retain their old world characteristics.

The line of distinction between old and New Delhi had begun to blur-north; south, east and west Delhi are more prevalent terms of demarcation. The facilities and opportunities available in Delhi have attracted Indians from far-flung corners of the country, making it a melting pot of sorts.

On the other hand, the presence of diplomatic and trade missions, the growing number of multinational companies and foreign investors, and the influx of tourists and visiting professionals have given the city, especially its southern and central parts, a cosmopolitan air. The coexistence of the past and the present at many levels characterizes Delhi,
as it does India.

The assimilation of a specific cultural influence is expressed differently by people living in different parts of the city, a fact that offers insights into the social strata. South Delhi is undoubtedly the trend-setter, and the fashions and lifestyles introduced here become the aspiration of many.

Today’s Delhi is completely different from the city of yesteryears. Ever increasing number of shopping malls, sky-rise buildings, offices, excessive plying of luxury vehicles and the newly introduced Metro trains have completely revolutionized the landscape of Delhi. These changes have made Delhi one of the fast developing cities in the world. Delhi has now become the city of hopes, dreams, and opportunities. People from all over India come here in search of work and make it their place of abode.

Resilience is and has been another characteristic feature of Delhi. Despite repeated attacks in the past and some terrorist attacks in recent times, the spirit of Delhi has remained undaunted. In fact, it has bounced back every time with even more dynamism and enthusiasm and has never let the feeling of death and destruction takes it over. Had this ever been the case, Delhi would have been abandoned ages ago.

CONCLUSION:

There are however, dramatic differences in localities, standards of living and adherence to traditions. Delhi is one of the most historic capitals in the world and two of its monuments - the Qutab Minar and
Humayun’s Tomb - have been declared world heritage sites. It is also one of the greenest capitals for the visitor; it serves as a perfect introduction to the cultural wealth, the complexities and the dynamism of India which Jawaharlal Nehru likened to “an ancient palimpsest on which layer of thought and reverie has been inscribed.” Delhi too, is a many layered city, and is still changing.

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