

Chapter 4

CITY OF DJINNS

A YEAR IN DELHI



City of Djinnns

“...for me Delhi always extended a stronger spell.”

-William Dalrymple.

The *City of Djinnns* is a unique sort of travel book. Generally travel books narrate the routes and travelling places and the writer's own reflections on such travels. But, the *City of Djinnns* stands apart in the sense that it records Dalrymple's year long stay at this Historic city – which stomachs within it, like the layers of onion, layers of historic developments and destructions, adding tastes to the Indian History but at the same time bringing gush of tears in one's eyes too. William Dalrymple claims it to be the story of one year in Delhi. He describes the city as the 'most complicated city he knows'. Dalrymple had visited Delhi when he was all of seventeen and was instantly under its spell. His initial attraction and wonder stricken reactions gradually mature into serious research stuff. He says in his introduction:

Moreover - I soon discovered – (Delhi) possessed a bottomless seam of stories, tales receding far beyond history, deep into the cavernous chambers of myth and legend. (Dalrymple *City of Djinnns* Prologue)

William Dalrymple records his quest of the Historic Developments of this city and in the course of it he nicely captures his encounters with a variety of people which range from a Sufi, a Taxi-Driver, Government officials, a clan of Anglo-Indians who have made India their home with their numberless grudges for 'new civilization' emerging in Delhi, and India at large'. William Dalrymple finds himself fascinated by this city on his very first visit as he admits:

From the very beginning I was mesmerised by the great capital, so totally unlike anything I had ever seen before. Delhi, it seemed at first, was full of riches and horrors: it was a labyrinth, a city of palaces, an open gutter, filtered light through a filigree lattice, a landscape of Domes, an anarchy, a press of people, a choice of flames a whiff of spices. (Dalrymple *City of Djinnns* Prologue)

The swap of his observations captures from '*tales receding far beyond history, deep into the cavernous chambers of myth and legends*' to the dump of the rubbish he observes from over his window:

In the morning I would look out to see the sad regiments of rag-pickers trawling the stinking berms of refuse; overhead, under a copper sky, vultures

circled the thermals forming patterns like fragments of glass in a kaleidoscope.

(8)

His sensibilities simultaneously imbibe the modern developments as well as the ancient alleys of this city, i.e. he excavates the known and unknown stories of it which time stands hiding within it. He undertakes ample efforts to bring to its life the mythical city of *INDRAPRAST* of Mahabharata, and all other historic incarnations of Delhi, at the same time exhibits superb liveliness to snapshot the modern temperament of the city. What fascinates him about Delhi is its capacity of nourishing a healthy co-existence of traditionalism and modernity, old conventions and new ways of life, traditional games and new sports, real inhabitants and new arrivals. As William Dalrymple puts it in his own style:

All the different ages of man were represented in the people of the city. Different millennia co-existed side by side. Minds set in different ages walked the same pavements, drank the same water, returned to the same dust.
(Dalrymple *City of Djinn*s Prologue)

Delhi, perhaps, might be the only city in the world which witnessed so many destructions and devastations either natural or manmade. After each of the devastations the city breathed its rebirth and resurgence with new enthusiasm and vigour. William Dalrymple seeks to solve this enigmatic temperament of the city:

When I met Pir Sadr-ud-Din, that I learned the secret that kept the city returning to new life. Delhi, said Pir Sadr-ud-Din, was a city of djinns. Though it had been burned by invaders time and time again, millennium after millennium, still the city was rebuilt; each time it rose like a phoenix from the fire. Just as the Hindus believe that a body will be reincarnated over and over again until it becomes perfect, so it seemed Delhi was destined to appear in a new incarnation century after century. The reason for this, said Sadr-ud-din, was that the djinns loved Delhi so much they could never bear to see it empty or deserted. (9)

Newly married, he has shifted to the city with his artist wife Olivia. She contributes to the book in her own way by drawing the illustrations for the book, and he settled down in a 'small top floor flat' in the regime of the Punjabi landlady Mrs. Puri, near '*the Sufi village*' Nizamuddin. Swept in the full swung of his historian curiosity, he undertakes microscopic exploration of the city and tries to excavate all the Eight incarnations of the city of Delhi. His sturdy investigative intentions become apparent from the very beginning.

He in the vein of introduction pin points the typicality of Mrs. Puri's mercantile mentality. She has acquired great financial success out of her calculative motto: "*sleep is silver but money is gold.*"

Mrs. Puri had achieved all this through a combination of hard work and good old-fashioned thrift. In the heat of summer she rarely put on the air conditioning. In winter she allowed herself the electric fire only an hour a day. She recycled the newspapers we threw out; and returning from parties late at night we could see her still sitting up, silhouetted against the window, knitting sweaters for export... (12)

William Dalrymple hooks interest of the readers by his disciplined pursuit of the layers of the History of the city and his accounts bring the past back into life in an acute aroma of interest. His narration successfully sways the readers in the lucid reconstruction of the old scores of the city which springs naturally from the writer's microscopic observations.

Balvinder Sing, the taxi-driver, is another close relation who not only drives him to several of his destinations in his Ambassador Taxi but also allows him to have real glimpses of 'Sikh' temperament. Balvinder, as Dalrymple introduces, is a 'kshatiya'- 'a warrior clan of India' and well nigh reflects this temperament in his driving skills too.

He disdains such cowardly acts as looking in the wing mirrors or using his indicators. His Ambassador is his chariot, his klaxon his sword. Weaving into the oncoming traffic, playing 'chicken' with the other taxis, Balvinder Singh is a 'Raja of the Road.' (16)

Though the author hails Balvinder in heroic measures, his wife Olivia develops a sort of dislike and disgust for Balvinder for his rough, coarse and rather uncivilised code of conducts. Her feminine preferences and observations notice such awkward traits in his persona and reacts quite scornfully. The author notes her reactions in this way.

Olivia is quick to point out that Mr. Singh is in many ways an unattractive character. A Punjabi Sikh, he is the Essex man of the east. He chews paan and spits the betel juice out of the window, leaving a red "go-fast" stripe along the car's right flank. He utters incoherent whoops of joy as he drives rickshaw on to the pavement or sends a herd of paper boys flying into ditch. He leaps out of taxi to urinate at traffic lights, and scratches his groins as he talk. Like Essex Man, he is a lecher. His eyes follow the saris up and down the Delhi

avenues; plump Sikh girls riding side-saddle on motorbikes are a particular distraction. (17)

The music of the vendors' selling-calls muses him and the cattle-herd without any herdsman around makes him wonder how? And the name of 'International backside Taxi Stand' just it is behind the India International Centre clutches his sense of humour. His experiences with the Government machinery is not at all pleasant one and the responses Mr. Lal, who sits under the Gandhiji's Message in his office, emits for the visitors would never surprise any Indian but William Dalrymple notes down them seriously and makes a serious comment:

Mr. Gupta's world – the cosy world of Freedom struggle, of homespun Congress Socialism and the Non-aligned Movement- all of it was going down; driving around New Delhi you could almost feel the old order crumbling as you watched, disappearing under a deluge of Japanese-designed Maruti cars, concrete shopping plazas and high-rise buildings. Satellite dishes now outnumbering the domes of the mosques and the spires of the temples. There was suddenly a lot of money about: no longer the rich go up to Simla for the summer; they closed their apartments and headed off to London or New York. (23)

He also passes a sensible comment on the thoughtless race of development which unreasonably averted its eye from the splendid Historical Monumental Treasure:

The Seventeenth century Salmon-pink observatory of Raja Man Singh- the Jantar Mantar- lay dwarfed by the surrounding high-rise towers that seemed purpose built to obscure its view of heavens. (24)

And,

It was said that not one private Lutyens bungalow would survive undemolished by the turn of the century. (24)

The effects of 'Globalisation'- Financial Outburst were not only the materialistic reaction on the Indian culture but it also reacted with the moral character of Indian society. Dalrymple's keen eye captures this trait too and presents it in the most picturesque style:

Adulterous couple now filled the public gardens; condom advertisements dominated the Delhi skyline. The Indian capital, once the last bastion of the chaperoned virgin, the double-locked bedroom and the arranged marriage, was slowly filling with lovers; whispering, blushing, occasionally holding hands, they loitered beneath flowering trees like figures from a miniature. Delhi was

starting to unbutton. After the long Victorian twilight, the sari was beginning to slip. (24)

He also seriously notes that the development was taking place on both the extreme ends i.e. on the one hand the middle class grew richer and abounded in the luxurious lucrative status, and on the other “*every week Six thousand penniless migrants poured into Delhi looking for work,*” and multiplying the number of Jhuggies.

‘Intolerance!’ yes, Dalrymple notes the emerging change in the ‘Attitudes’ of the people, as he comments:

Attitudes were changing too. A subtle hardening seemed to have taken place. In the smart drawing-rooms of Delhi, from where the fate of India’s 880 million people was controlled, the middle class seemed to be growing intolerant; the great Hindu qualities of assimilation and acceptance were no longer highly prized. A mild form of fascism was in fashion: educated people would tell you that it was about time those bloody Muslims were disciplined—that they had been pampered and appeased by the Congress party for too long, that they were filthy and fanatical, that they bred like rabbits. They should all be put behind bars, hostesses would tell you as they poured you a glass of imported whisky; expulsion was too good for them. (25)

Dalrymple presents a detailed account of the post ‘Indira Murder’ riots. He minutely presents the whole panorama of convulsion that gripped Delhi following the murder of contemporary Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi by her own Sikh Body-Guards. Since Indira Gandhi was murdered by the Sikh Guards in retaliation for her attack on the holiest Sikh shrine of Harmandir Sahib (aka Golden Temple) in Amritsar, in which 1000 people were estimated to have died, it created a great vortex of hatred for the whole Sikh community all over India among the Indians. The Sikh families were attacked ruthlessly only in the vein ‘*khoon ka badala khoon*’ ‘Blood for Blood’. He weaves the episodes of atrocities with the families of Mr. and Mrs. Puri, Balavinder Singh and the most pathetic one that of Sohanlal Sandhu of Trilokpuri. The whole Sikh majority area of Trilokpuri was systematically ransacked for looting and a wild play of massacre was let loose. The anti-Sikh riots were well engineered under the mute confirmation of the government machineries in order to “teach the Sikhs a lesson:

...it was Block 32 that dominated the headlines. Dogs were found fighting over piles of purple human entrails. Charred and roasted bodies lay in great heaps in the gullies; kerosene fumes still hung heavy in the air. Piles of hair, cut

from the Sikhs before they were burned alive, lay on the varandah. Hacked-off limbs clogged the gutters. (31)

Sohanlal Sandhu's family had paid the gravest toll. However (un)fortunate he, his wife and Ranjit who was now mentally diseased due to the stone hit in one of the mob stone hurling proved to evade the attention of the blood-thirsty demon mobs, his other two sons had fallen victim of the wild volcano of massacre that was triggered in public psyche. Sohanlal presents this tragic episode to William in the following words:

But my other two sons were less fortunate. On the second day they were discovered hiding in the shop of some Hindu friends. The mob burned the shop. Then they put the rubber tyres around the necks of my sons, doused them with petrol and burned them too. (34)

William Dalrymple also captures the sad glimpses of filial pains in the words of Sohanlal Sandhu and also gets impressed by the way the parents' minds seek self derived upon philosophical solution:

God is behind every act", he said, "There must have been something wrong that we did in the past. (34)

He highlights the spirit of reconciliation in the temperament of the persons who paid the severest toll in such unreasonable politics inspired riots, and tries to draw attention to the common character of life of Delhi.

No: now we are no longer worried. I (Sohanlal Sandhu) am still the Granthi of the gurudwara. I give langar (food) to the poor Hindus; the rich Hindus give us offerings. These wounds are healed now. (35)

He feels a bit confused and he confesses it too that on one hand the Delhi-wallahs are always 'people of gentleness and elaborate courtesy', and on the other they might become thirsty of blood of their own once beloved neighbours or 'avert their eyes' from their cold blooded murders.

...when provoked the inhabitants of this mild town could rise up and commit acts of extreme brutality. Men would avert their eyes as next door neighbours were burned alive or disembowelled. The same people who would invite you to share their last plate of food could, with equal spontaneity, lose control and run amok. Then with equal ease they could return to their bazaars and shops, factories and offices and carry on as if nothing had happened. It was difficult to understand. (36)

Nesting back to his historic sensibilities, William Dalrymple does not miss to note the Historic habit of Delhi to the episodes of bloodshed. Clutching this Historic temperament of this unique city, he clearly notes:

...despite Delhi's historic reputation as the most cultured town in India, the city's history was punctured with many such flashes of terrible orgiastic violence. (36).

He refers to the post- partition riots as the most disturbing episode in the city's life span. He clearly demonstrates with his analytical gauge that post- partition Delhi is another incarnation of the City of Djinnns. Delhi before partition was Mughal and British Delhi with her English ornamentation and Mughal customs, traditions and sports. The partition of India in 1947 was the most fateful incident in the history of Indian sub-continent. It made a very great impact on Indian people, turning the Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims who for a considerably long period unitedly fought against the British into one another's enemies. In the post-partition riots, thousands of men from both sides were massacred, a great number of women raped and abducted, and children mutilated and property destroyed. This is such a powerful and influential chapter in the Indian History that its effects are seen more or less on each and every Indian, and it has given birth to a bulk of literature which can be branded as Partition Literature not only in Indian English but almost in all the Indian Languages. Manohar Mangolakar in his Novel *A Bend In Ganges* narrates these horrifying accounts of war-ridden humanity in following terms:

...how the Sunrise of our freedom found millions done to death, mutilated or shamed, and tens of millions disposed of all that they had owned and cherished and brutally tossed on the other side of the new artificial border between India and Pakistan.”(*A Bend In Ganges*)

William Dalrymple notes that Delhi of the modern time is inhabited by a major class of people who once got themselves fixed in the vortex of the partition tragedy. The traumatic effects of the partition tragedy is so fresh and alive that even after 65 years person like Punjab Singh does not like in the natural case to refer to those episodic culminations.

The story of Mr. And Mrs. Puri as well as that of Punjab Singh is the story of this partition migration. Punjab Singh's narration of the violence in his village Samundra in the district Lyllapur confirms how the political factors change the whole social environment and put two groups in opposition and turn thirsty of each other's blood- those who once lived in peace and harmony with the spirit of brotherhood.

Same fate descended upon Mr. And Mrs. Puri. They had to leave all their possessions behind and flee to the safer place in order to be alive. Using the international parallel, William Dalrymple aptly points out their case:

Like the Palestinians a year later, they expected to come back within a few months when peace had been restored. Like the Palestinian, they never returned. (42)

Among other cases, the case of Mr. Seth rivets our attention. He was posted at Sheikhpur near Lahore as an Assistant Ticket Inspector, in 1946. Just after a year, as the partition bloodshed started, he was within the territory of Pakistan. In that commotion, as one train of refugees passed from the station, the Gurakhas, all Hindus, opened precautionary firing which accidentally killed the wife of the Muslim station master. Out of grief, the station master wanted to kill Mr. Seth, the Assistant Ticket Inspector as he was the only Hindu available. Fortunately he missed and Mr. Seth, without wasting time headed towards Hindustan. Somehow, he managed to save his life, escaped death four times as he claims, and reached Amritsar. Later he was transferred to Delhi where he was given a temporary house, and the irony is that it belonged to a Muslim who had been shot dead in varandah.

In later part, the scholar Dr. Jaffery who had also lost his parents and elder brothers in partition massacres notes:

In this city culture and civilization have always been very thin dresses. It does not take much for that dress to be torn off and for what lies beneath to be revealed. (190)

Through the partition tragedy, William Dalrymple drives his point home that Modern Delhi is inhabited and dominated by purely new arrivals, especially the mercantile troops (the Sikhs) poured into Delhi out of Partition Episode pushing the two of the earlier rulers namely the Mughal and the Britishers of this ancient city into background.

Of the two people who had ruled Delhi during the previous years, the Britishers disappeared completely while the Indian Muslims were reduced to an impoverished minority. (36)

And,

Today, the two worlds, Mughal Old Delhi and Punjabi New Delhi, mix but rarely. Each keeps to itself, each absolutely certain of its superiority over the other. (45)

Dalrymple notes that post-partition developments gave Delhi a metropolitan facelift and the old historical city underwent a slow but steady stagnation and

impoverishment. He visits the old city and makes all efforts to capture the traces of that fabulous city which used to hypnotise the world travellers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In such explorations, he finds out Shamin, the calligrapher, who has been keeping alive the art of Mughal Courts. Shamin informs him about the baleful state of his once prestigious art, and also indicates that the art would meet its sad doom as neither his brother Ali nor his son seem any bit curious about their forefather's art. Shamin takes pride of it, and though there is no much monetary return in it, intends to keep it alive so long as he is alive.

Quoting the glory-songs of the city of Djinns by the poets of 17th and 18th centuries-

“Its towers are resting place of the sun” (Chandra Bhan)

“It is the seat of Empire... the centre of the great circle of Islam.”

Dalrymple holds a queer contrast to the present day neglect to the valuable historical monuments and the regal temperament of the city. The seventeenth century Moonlight Bazaar (i.e. Chandani Chawk), once bearing the grandeur of elegant caravanserais and fabulous Mughal gardens, has got transformed into the press of vendors with all typicality of Indian Market place. The ancient ‘Havelis’ and ‘Shish-Mahals’ of Shahjahanabad have been converted into factories and workshops. The metal shutters affixed to them seem extremely irrelevant. He notes with pain that even the ‘Haksers Haveli’ associated with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister; his birth place stands in its utter ruins. His keen observant eye doesn't fail to pin point the fine carvings and finish and makes us imagine the grand, glorious and gorgeous stone incarnation of the perfect building which might have stood upright in past.

The gate house survives still as a witness to this grandeur: with its Dholpur sandstone façade, its delicate Jharokha balconies and its fine fish-tail mouldings, it is still a magnificent sight. (56)

Sheer negligence in the maintenance and degradation of the fine architectural glories pains his artistic sensibilities:

(But) the interior is a gutted ruin. Through the locked grill you can see the desolation; collapsed rafters now act as a sort of walkway for the cook who squats in the rubble frying his samosa; the cellars are gradually overflowing with his kitchen refuse and old potato peelings. Cusped sandstone arches are buried up to their capitals in rubble; vaults hand suspended in a litter of disintegrating brick work. No one seems to care. It is as if the people of Delhi

had washed their hands off the fine old mansions of the old city in their enthusiasm to move into the concrete bunkers of the new. (56)

Like the architectural monuments, the regal tongue 'Urdu' is in her ruins as Begum Hamida Sultan registers her complaint:

"I loved Delhi. But, now Delhi is dead. Even our language is dead."

And the same contempt rise in the response of Ahmed Ali- the writer of 'Twilight in Delhi' (1940), when William Dalrymple goes to interview him across the border Pakistan. Ahmed feels great disrespect for Pakistan which he calls the nation of 'thugs' where he never dreamt to shift to. William Dalrymple gets him to out pour his heart on this sensitive issue. He persuades him to pour his feelings out which have been boiling within the locked furnace of his heart. And what comes out is really surprising and astonishing. Ahmed had never intended to shift to the artificial land of Pakistan, but during the days of partition, he had been a visiting professor in Nanking in China, from where he was not permitted enter India just on the grounds that he was a Muslim. After a long struggle with the cold blooded bureaucrats, the only place left for him to head towards was Pakistan. This mishap filled him with bitter feelings for India- the land he doesn't prefer to set his foot on even for a while, as he himself puts it:

"How could I revisit that which was once mine and which was now no longer mine?" (65)

An untransformed- original version of Delhi is still alive in the memories of all the Muslims who have shifted to the other side of the Border. In Karanchi alone, as William Dalrymple states, there are 200000 refugees who had fled from Delhi to Pakistan during the partition upheavals. The streets of Karanchi are named after great Delhi-wallah of History. Unaware of Delhi's modernistic facelift, they inquire William Dalrymple about the glorious regions of Delhi. A judge inquired William Dalrymple if he had ever been to the Gulli Churiwalla- the area of great Havellies...To this he ironically cites the plight that presently, the place has been transformed into nothing but a dirty ghetto full of decaying warehouses in the city's crush for modernisation and its make over as the commercial complex.

William Dalrymple expresses his wonder as he sees how with accuracy and in the spirit of development, India has managed to come out of the shadows of the Raj- i.e. the British Imperial Rule. He clearly observes that for new Indian generations the British Rule seemed a remote past, their main focus remains constant on the upcoming bright allies of future. William Dalrymple mentions that in Britain there are still traces of Imperial India and instances of it are visible in the books short-listed for Booker

prize in recent years such as *Midnight's Children*, (71) - all of these books in one form or another, context or cover, weave or voice within their subject the glimpses of Imperial India:

...I was intrigued by the degree to which India has managed to shed its colonial baggage. True, people spoke English, played cricket and voted in Westminster-style election. Nevertheless, far from encountering the familiar, I was astonished how little evidence remained of two centuries of Colonial Rule. (71)

The same point, he finds embossed in the context of the statue of George V, which has turned out only to be "...an unwanted reminder of a period few Indians look back to with any nostalgia" (72).

Though after the departure of the Britishers, not only the Culture but the English language has also got Indianisation and has become 'Hinglish' to some extent, and though much of the phrases in Hobson Jobson's Glossary have turned out to be stone dead, British India still remains alive at least in the memories of the Britishers who spent a considerably longer period of their lives in British India. One such person William Dalrymple interviews is Iris Portal. Though, at present she lives in East Anglia, she presents a lively picture of the British Regal Grandeurs in India. Her account presents the details how the Britishers in India pampered their lives busy riding, picnicking, dancing, playing and hunting. It was time when Lutyens had started building the British version of New Delhi. Among the Britishers there were dual notions and some like her father's generation were sternly against the extravagance of bringing up costly buildings, and were of the opinion that those funds could have been utilised for some far better purposes. They were also driven by the secret enigmatic fear that.....

If ever anybody raised the subject of New Delhi my father would always quote the Persian couplet in a most gloomy voice. And of course it did come true. Whoever has built a new city in Delhi has always lost it: The Pandava Brethren, Prithviraj Chauhan, Ferozshah Tughluk, Shah Jehan...They all built new cities and they all lost them. We were not exception. (80)

William seems greatly impressed by the architectural guts of Lutyens. He praises his architectural insights in the buildings he witnesses especially; the Viceroy's house-i.e. today's Rastrapati Bhavan. He goes to the extent-

"Lutyens, after all, was a far greater architect than Albert Speer." (82)

William Dalrymple also comments that like other Imperial cities, the Lutyens' construction took shape to symbolise superiority of the '**Rulers**' over the '**Ruled**'.

Yet there can be no doubt that New Delhi was very deliberately built as an expression of the unconquerable might of the Raj. As Lord Stamfordham, Private Secretary to George V, wrote in a letter articulating the king emperor's views on his new capital: 'we must let [the Indians] see for the first time the power of Western civilisation. (82-83)

The personality of Lutyens as it emerges from his letter, which William Dalrymple puts before us, exhibits the Imperial temperament considering Indian subjects as 'blacks', 'blackamoors', 'natives', or 'niggers', etc. and expressing it bluntly like 'sly slime of the Eastern mind', 'the very low intelligence of the natives', even his 'superior ego' blinds him to the beauty of the Taj Mahal.

In response to Nehru's comment on New Delhi calling it to be the visible symbol of British power, with all its ostentation and extravagance, William Dalrymple seems to lose his neutral approach and favours New Delhi by bringing the instance of Le Corbusier's Chandigadh. He indicates the inferiority of the planning of Chandigadh and calls it an urban disaster in compare to the monumental grandeur of Lutyens' New Delhi.

In order to collect much first hand information about Imperial Delhi, William Dalrymple looks for the English stayers on, who remained in India even after the wake of Independent India. He finds out two ladies in Simla- Phyllis and Edith Haxby. They have, as they relate to William Dalrymple, very bad time in Simla and wish to go back to Britain. It seems very tough for them to find the gorgeous Imperial past replaced with the Indian dominance reducing them to sheer minority lot.

William Dalrymple nicely wraps the historical research work with the lively description of seasonal changes and accordingly the change of the temperament of Delhi under the spell of different festivals. Diwali brings a new charm to Delhi. He observes different ways of celebration. In the chilling winter of Delhi which has crept into Delhi 'dark-clad, soft-footed, unannounced and unwelcome', he reads about the 'Twilight' period of History of Delhi- i.e. the period between the Mughal Fall and English Rise in the political domain of Delhi, more precisely the period between the Persian massacre of 1739 and the equally violent reactions after the mutiny of 1857.

He picks up a few outlining instances showing the loosening grip of Mughal dynasty and losing the thrown against the Persian ruler Nadir Shah. The gloom of the defeat and the destruction by the invaders enveloped the public temperament in the

moods of melancholy and pensiveness. This public mood finds nice captioning in the expressions of the poets of that time:

There is no house from where jackal's cry cannot be heard.

The mosques at evening are unlit and deserted

In the once beautiful gardens, the grass grows waist-high around fallen pillars and ruined arches. Not even a lamp of clay now burns where once the chandelier blazed with light... (95)

The Persian rule reached its nadir during the reign of the sightless emperor Shah Alam.

William Dalrymple goes through the evidences of the first British penetration in Delhi and its surrounding regions. His library research presents the account of Franklin, Sir David Ochterlony and William Fraser (The Scotsmen). Out of them, perhaps because Fraser of Inverness happens to be the kinsman of Olivia, his wife, William Dalrymple presents a detailed life story of him, his adventures and his passion for hunting, fighting and marrying Indian beautiful ladies. The account of Fraser runs so long that sometimes we feel that William Dalrymple has lost his interest from Delhi and the whole focus got shifted to the chronicle of William Fraser.

William Fraser was one of the early Europeans who had been sent from Calcutta to be the Resident's Assistant. To some extent he resembled Kurtz of Conrad's Heart of Darkness, crazy to his own whims. He was a young Persian scholar from Inverness (Scotland). He had moulded himself in Indian outfits, pruned long moustache in Rajput manner and kept many Indian beauties in his harem and had a lot of children. He catered regal hobbies like hunting, marrying a number of ladies. William Dalrymple goes through his correspondence and paintings of Fraser Album and derives a conclusion that 'Fraser was hypnotised by the great capital and refused all opportunities that would take him away from Delhi.' After his professional responsibilities, his artistic interests kept him busy learning oriental languages, collecting manuscripts and marrying Indian beauties. Later when Mughal rule weakened and Delhi became unsafe owing to the attacks of brigands and Mahratta cavalry, he was engaged to drive them away. His danger loving nature excited his interests in such risky jobs that Aleck talked of him to his parents in the letter as "proud, fiery and impetuous" and "too fond of exposing himself to danger". He was stationed in the Mewat district to civilise the area, here he established his own small empire and lived like a nawab, 'being [as] absolute in his Domain as Bonapart in France.' he had adopted the Indian life-style and customs that his brother Aleck asserts

Long residence so distant from the principal European stations has made William Fraser half a Hindustanee. (107)

William Dalrymple visits the existing building where once stood the British Residency and describes it in his own unique style:

The Residency stands today in one of the most depressing and impoverished parts of Delhi. (109)

His investigative eyes also find out that the British Residency was only restructured on the Mughal building of Dara Shukoh's library, just like the Resident Ochterlony, appearing British from outside but inside perfectly fashioned in Mughal style.

William Dalrymple presents the weird story of Norah Nicholson, an Anglo-Indian whom he calls a living fossil of the Twilight period. She had very bad time in her old age, ended up in an open plot with her household of dogs, cats, peahens, partridges and babbler birds and peacocks who sometimes shared bed with her as they fell down from the shattered roof at night. William Dalrymple later discovers she died of a snake bite which shared her own household and she tried to feed it with milk. The neighbour informed him that she would not do anything to drive that virulent creature away instead. He also finds a wide and large colony of the Anglo-Indians who are now adjusting themselves in the new incarnation of India.

He carefully traces Fraser's bungalow which is now the office of the Chief Engineer of Northern Railway Board [Construction Department] Govt. of India. Having described the difficulties he faced before being allowed inside just because he is a foreigner, he maintains a good dialogue with Mr. Prasad, the Railway Officer, and brings to light the hidden tykhanna which is perhaps the only one of its kind in existence and in the worst condition. He also infers that it must be with the help of this tykhanna facility the Fraser brothers might have defeated the terrible heat of Delhi summer and perhaps that is why it didn't get mention in any of their correspondence.

The plaster on the walls had long since flaked off, and as we descended you could see that the brick work was changing. The large and solid British bricks which indicated Residency-period work gave way to the smaller and more delicate bricks favoured by Mughal builders. Within a few seconds of reaching the bottom the janitor's flashlight fell on a moulding that was unmistakably of Shah Jehan's period. (124)

And for the secret passages he writes:

“Delhi is alive with the legends of secret passages-”

And,

Today the passages are only blocked with a small plug of concrete; it should not be difficult to remove that plug and investigate what lies beyond. The problem would be to motivate India's impoverished and bureaucratic Archaeological Survey to take interest in the matter. (126)

Through the case of Skinner Sahib, and the fate of his 'half-caste' family, Dalrymple presents the impoverished plight of Anglo-Indians. These Anglo-Indians' condition, like that of Norah and Huxby sisters, was very miserable- neither they got acceptance among the Britishers nor were they welcome in the Indian societal circles. Dalrymple dissects the problem saying, "As Skinner's career demonstrated, Hindu and British were both too proud of their blood for 'Half-caste' ever to be really successful."

Increasingly they came to suffer the worst racial prejudices of both Indians and British: the Indians refused to mix with them; and despite their fierce and unwavering loyalty to the Union Jack, the English rigidly excluded them from their clubs and drawing rooms. Behind their backs they were cruelly ridiculed as 'chee-chees, 'Blakie-whitie', or 'Chutney Marys'. (131)

William Dalrymple brings under focus the massacre that followed the uprising of 1857. He confesses that the operations after the uprising brought on surface 'all the most horrible characteristics of English character- philistinism, narrow-mindedness, bigotry, vengefulness, etc.-

"Three thousand Delhi-wallahs were tried and executed – either hanged, shot or blown from the mouth of cannon – on flimsiest evidence." (147)

Ghalib, the great Urdu poet, was greatly pained at the helplessness of the Indian folks and his pain flowed like melting tears in his words:

Helpless I watch the wives and children of aristocrats literally begging from door to door. One must have a heart of steel to witness the contemporary scene...the moon-faced Begums of the Red fort wandering around the streets in filthy clothes, ragged pyjamas and broken shoes. (148)

The Twilight period of the City of Djinns was thus over with the Britishers seizing the total command of the city after the blood shedding events that followed the uprising of 1857.

Modern Delhi has evolved a metropolitan culture and westernized night life. William Dalrymple being a man from West enjoys this superficial culture where the nouveau riche people as well as persons holding powerful positions get pooled together in night parties and make such places a platform to exhibit their riches and high profile contacts as the parameter of their success. William seems to present this

new cult of Delhi in contrast to the old regal gorgeousness of Delhi code of conducts, the traits which impressed each and every one who came in their contact.

Next, in his unique comic vein Dalrymple narrates the conjurations of Mrs. Puri to raise the rent of the flat. He nicely presents how initially in a roundabout way and then becoming somewhat blunt Mrs. Puri justifies her point of raising the rent. Here once again he embosses the money mindedness of this Punjabi land lady and presents an another evidence of the financial success of the Punjabi people as their capacity to maintain the profit and loss scales even in their daily life and relations too.

Paying visit to the tomb of Safdarjung, Dalrymple strikes open still another facet of Delhi's fate. He presents the details of Delhi under the reign of Muhammad Shah, popularly known in the Indian History as Rangila (The Colourful). And as his name implied, William Dalrymple notes, he gave up any pretence of ruling, 'in the morning he watched Partridge and Elephant fights; in the afternoon he was entertained by the jugglers, ventriloquists, mime artists and conjurers; Politics he wisely left to his scheming advisors.

William Dalrymple also asserts that it was because of this policy he could survive as the longest surviving sovereign. The empire had shrunk and lost almost all its far and wide territories, the patent arts of cavalry of gorgeous Delhi were defeated by the arts of music, poetry and paintings. William Dalrymple rightly notes that it was the time when the poets of Delhi (e.g. Mir Taqui Mir) were closely followed:

A new Gazal (love lyric) by one of the great Delhi poet was considered the most desirable gift that any civilised host could wish for. (157)

After the death of Muhammad Shah, Safdarjung picked up the opportunity to take the reins of power in his hands reducing the ascender to the throne a mere filigree of show. But the extravagances and arrogance of Safdarjung enraged the British power who summoned other regional forces and got him thrown out of the city. After his death, his son begged permission to build his father's tomb in Delhi.

Expert eyes of Dalrymple do not fail to notice the derogatory architectural merits of this tomb. Opening pages of its history, he notes, since the quarries of quality marble around Agra were no longer under the Mughal control and the road between Delhi and Agra being under the control of Jat tribesmen, the builder of this tomb had to stripe the necessary material from the other existing tombs. The awkward patches of pink sandstones in the white dome announce the shortage of material. Still, as William Dalrymple notes, the building stands signature of historic importance:

The building tells a story of drunken laughter as the pillars of empire collapsed in a cloud of dust and masonry; and afterwards, of dancing in the ruins. (159)

Form the account of Rangila, Dalrymple's interest gets riveted to the Mughal sports of Elephant and Partridge fights. He traces the survival of these sports in modern Delhi. After the initial negative responses, and slight details of the last Elephant fight which had taken place at the turn of the century in the princely state of Rajputana, William Dalrymple accidentally comes to know about the 'Partridge Fight' from Balvinder. Balvinder called it 'Bird-Challenge'. Dalrymple was eager to witness the sport.

William Dalrymple presents a live account of the surviving traces of once favorite pastime 'Mughal Sport'. The excitement of the sport has drawn a large number of persons to the 'Grave-Yard' on the Sunday morning. William Dalrymple is welcomed and given all the details about the rules and regulations of the sport. Be it the façade of any ancient building or the partridge fight, William Dalrymple's clutching description pulses with acute liveliness:

For a few seconds the two birds stood facing each other, chests fully extended; then Handlebar's bird flew at its rival with a new and sudden violence. He dealt the Muslim's bird a glancing blow with the hook of his beak, then rose up, wings arched, and fell heavily on the lighter bird's head. As he hopped out of reach he again cut the darker bird with his spurs. (164)

Along with, William Dalrymple also captions the point that such sports are popular among the lower middle class males who have their own worries, struggles and tough tasks of life, as Punjabsingh puts it:

People are coming here drunk, worried or tired of the chores of the world, but always they leave this place refreshed. (165)

Romantic character of Delhi public is another striking point about Sufderjung's Delhi. He cites pictorial descriptions of such unlicensed hedonism of Delhi public in Quli Khan's 'Murraqqa-e-Delhi' (the book which he labels as his favourite one). Khan has described in detail how even the Mehfiles at the religious places got the dying of romantic sheds where men and women busied themselves in amorous activities. William Dalrymple aptly notes that these traces are also still alive in some parts of Delhi and one can find them only if one knows where exactly to look for them:

Yet as I discovered that December, the bawdiness of Sufdarjung's Delhi does survive, kept alive by one particular group of Delhi-wallah.

You can still find them in the dark gullies of the old city- if you know where to look. (168-169)

From the bawdiness of Safderjung's Delhi, William Dalrymple generates interest in the most secretive society of Delhi '**Eunuchs**'- the harem guards of Mughal India.

They were clad in brightly coloured silks and muslins, flowing saris edged in glittering gold brocade. They were heavily made up, with painted cheeks and scarlet lipstick; each of their noses was pierced with a single diamond stud they were dressed for nautch, dressed as women, yet they were not women,. Even at a distance of twenty yards I could see that their physiognomy was very different from the delicate features of Indian girls. Their faces were too strong, their arms were too thick, their shoulders were wrong they smoked. Physically, they resembled painted men, yet they were not men. (169)

His ten days efforts led him to fruitless toil, as no eunuch was ready to open up any page of their personal life before him. When he was exactly on the verge of giving up his mission, he accidentally happened to meet Zakir, a young man, who created a bridge between him and the eunuchs and made a kind of dialogue possible. Zakir took him to the Haveli of Chaman Guru.

William Dalrymple closely follows the history of these mysterious 'Eunuchs', and derives the conclusion that like the architectures and many other ways of life of modern Delhi – the lives of these Eunuchs were also a fusion/merger of both the Hindu and Muslim traditions. In the Eurasian history, they are referred to in ancient Assyrian and Babylonian stelaes and became popular as servants- and as passive sexual play things. In the Anglo-Saxon England and Italy until 19th century they were given singing castrato roles in opera as well as in the Vatican Sistine choir. The Muslim world held them perfect as the harem guards owing to their impotence, and with their faithful services they rose to power as Chamberlains, Governors and even Generals.

And in the Hindu texts – The Vedas – the castration was seen as a degrading punishment. The persons 'castrated' as a part of punishment was pushed to the lower of the lowest category of the society. In the time of Mahabharata, the condition had improved a little. But on the whole, to be a eunuch was a 'curse'.

William Dalrymple notes that in the course of History – both in the Hindu and the Muslim traditions, the 'Hizaras' [Eunuchs] were subject to derogatory positions. Moreover, the modern generations of such eunuchs exhibit unique fusion of both traditions, which he calls 'Indian Compromise'. On the personal level, they are ill-ominous, but on general grounds 'Wel-come' as the agents of good fortunes; i.e. if a

couple gives birth to such a person, it is considered as a 'curse', but at the marriages or at other celebrations, Hizaras' presence is considered ominous, Hizaras' blessings or curse are considered to be instant effective.

After two months of close follow-ups, William Dalrymple succeeds in winning the confidence and closeness of the household of Chaman Guru and his three Chelas- namely- Panna, Vimala and Raziya. It is really astonishing, how they had got chained together in one household though they belonged to exactly different households, cultures and backgrounds. Still they had their own personal utopia, dreams and ideology and their different roles in the household and outside packed with harmonious rut.

William goes with them on the 'Tolly' and personally witnesses their functioning the role of 'Hizaras' among social circles. He finally sums up their plight:

[But] when society closes off all other opportunities there are only two choices for the Eunuchs: dancing and prostitution. Of these, going on 'Tolly' is probably preferable- and possibly more lucrative. (183)

And,

Though no faults of their own, through deformity or genetic accident, they found themselves marginalised by Indian society, turned into something half way between a talisman and an object of ridicule. Yet in their own terms they seem fairly content with their lives and they do not rail against the fate that has left them with this role. (183)

William Dalrymple focuses on the golden age of the City of Djinn's i.e. the period of reign of Shah Jehan. In the company of studious Dr. Jaffery, who has been working for long on transcribing 'Shah Jehan Nama', with the travel notes of Bernier in the 'Mughul Empire' and Manucci's 'Mogul India', he enacts the whole mess of Mughul Politics which is complex, coarse and brute enough to murder a brother, poison a sister or starve the father. He concludes that Shah Jehan's downfall and tragic end were due to some vulnerable flaws of his own character, his pride, his sexual gluttony and the unjust way he handled his children.

William Dalrymple emphasises the typical Mughul politics of the day that teemed with exercise of dissimulation and hypocrisy, treachery and treasons behind the beautiful veil of Autocracy and refined manners and Religious relics. He presents the bit-by-bit chronicle of Aurangzeb's seizing of power. Actually, Shah Jehan did not pay enough attention, and did not give enough significance to Aurangzeb. He saw an ideal emperor in his elder son Dara Sukhoh. He was treated like the heir and all the

attention was concentrated on Dara's refinements, whereas Aurangzeb was deliberately kept away from this aristocratic business.

Dara Sukhoh was studious and enjoyed the company of learned as well as strong soldiers. He took interest in the beliefs and principles of Hinduism too. He translated the Hindu religious texts like Upanisads, the Bhagvad Gita and the Yoga-Vasista in Persian. Much to the dislike of the orthodox Muslim nobles [who produced their disagreements in only behind his back]; Dara produced the 'Majma-ul-Baharain' [The Mingling of two oceans namely Muslim and Hinduism]. This pinched the shoes of the Muslim nobles as their crown prince was talking of 'Infidelity and Islam to be twin brothers'. Dara's political superiority was unsurpassable and his seat in the court was next only to the Sultan himself.

On the other hand, Aurangzeb was capable of great dissimulation and hypocrisy. He had a strong web of spies spread across the capital as William puts it, that '*nothing could be said in Delhi without Aurangzeb coming to hear of it.*' (197). he led a strict ascetic life in the eye of public, but secretly nurtured greater scheming, and waited for an appropriate chance to settle his account with his father for his unreasonable affections for Dara, his elder brother.

Just like among the brothers, an acute hostility also prevailed between two daughters of Shah Jehan- Jahanara and Roshanara. Sultan Shah Jehan, just like Dara Sukhoh, treated Jahanara with amounts of greater affection. And after the death of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal and after having shifted to Shah Jehanabad, this locks of relationship had strengthened to that degree that William Dalrymple quotes Bernier, the French traveler who had been in Delhi and in Shah Jehan's court for a long time, "it would have been unjust to deny the king the privilege of gathering fruits from the tree he himself planted" (198).

Even another quotation from Bernier's account about the King's unannounced appearance at Jahanara's residence in the close perusal of the secret information of Jahanara's orgies, and giving suggestion to Jahanara to take bath and in this way murdering the gallant hiding in the capacious cauldron used for bath, also confirms of such intimate relations. Still further confirmation is found in the facts that it was Jahanara who nursed the king in his critical illness and even at the time of his death, she was the only person with him nursing him in the imprisonment in his own palace.

Roshanara, on the other hand, remained constantly discontented at the greater significance attributed to Jahanara and consequently the neglect and the inferior status she had to experience. Somehow, like her brother Aurangzeb, she too had maintained a rich textured network of spies in the entire system. She joined her hands with

Aurangzeb and helped him to a greater extent in his conspiracies and ultimate war against their own father and snatching away the reins of power from him, and his ascending on the throne of this glorious city. During the reign of Aurangzeb, she enjoyed unfathomed power and all the lavishness of royal grandeurs. However, later when Aurangzeb was ill, her lust for power made her scheme against Aurangzeb, which ultimately cost her very dear. Thinking that Aurangzeb would not survive the illness, she stole the royal-stamp and got a document prepared announcing not the elder but the younger adolescent son of Aurangzeb be the rightful to ascending to the throne. Her logic behind this was very simple. When the younger son were on the throne, she would enjoy and exercise some extra as being the guardian. Somehow, her plan got disposed as Aurangzeb miraculously recovered from the illness that seemed fatal, and when from the spies he came to know about his beloved sister's misadventure, he poisoned her. She met a terrible end. She was buried under a pavilion in the Roshanara garden she herself had built.

Shah Jehan's voracious appetite for sex led him to consume some substantial quantities of aphrodisiacs 'the stimulating drugs', which had some fatal side effects, as Manucci pointed out:

These stimulating drugs brought on retention of urine...for three days Shah Jehan was almost at death's door. (231)

The Emperor's severe illness and the news of his palace locked fanned the fire of upheaval until now was underground and gave start to the contest amongst the four princes as to who would ascend on the throne. The first to make the move was the viceroy of Bengal, the second son of Shah Jehan, Shah Shuja. The armies of Dara subdued his attacks. When recovered the sultan himself took over Dara's side. On the other hand, Aurangzeb joined his hands with his brother Murad Baksh. Though he had a smaller army, he with his cunningness bribed some of the officials of Dara's army, and with their help shattered Dara's army. When Dara saw the imminent defeat, he fled from the spot. On the other hand, the old monarch's i.e. Shah Jehan's scheme of ambushing Aurangzeb converted into utter failure by Roshanara Begum. Ultimately, Aurangzeb, imprisoned his father, murdered his three brothers, and ascended to the throne of Delhi.

The height of hatred for one's own kinsmen and deriving sadistic pleasure from their miserable plight undergoing unbearable pains might be the unique quality of the apex family of Mughal Empire. Aurangzeb had already put Murad Baksh, (his brother with whose help he had won the battle against Dara), into the dungeon where he was force fed poppy-water that would ultimately led him to insanity. After the

arrest, as Bernier puts it, Dara was also brought to Delhi, where in presence of Dara's young son Dara was taken to the full length of Chandni-Chawk in the fashion of a procession exercising the thud of humiliation. He was kept imprisoned where after sometime, he was beheaded by Aurangzeb's nobles in front of his son. The nobles as a gesture to please their master cleaned and wrapped the head in a turban and presented it to Aurangzeb in a golden dish. Having examined the face Aurangzeb thrust at it three times with a sword and uttered the words vile with hatred.

“Behold the face of a would be king and emperor of all the Mughal realms. Take him out of my sight.” (237)

Roshanara Begum was overjoyed at the end of Dara and she threw a party in the Imperial Harem at which she persuaded Aurangzeb to send the 'head' to Shah Jehan as a present thinking that it would be an amusing joke. The whole event, with utter painful consequences, as Dalrymple quotes Manucci, goes this way:

“I'tibar Khan [The Eunuch] waited until the hour Shah Jehan had sat down to dinner. When he had begun to eat, I'tibar Khan entered with the box and laid it before the unhappy father, saying: 'King Aurangzeb, your son sends this plat to your majesty to let you see that he does not forget you.' The old Emperor said: 'Blessed be God that my son still remembers me.' The box having been placed upon the table, he ordered it with great eagerness to be opened. But on withdrawing the lid, he discovered the face of Prince Dara. Horrified, he uttered a cry and fell on his hands and face upon the table, and, striking against the golden vessels, broke some of his teeth and lay there apparently lifeless.

Jahanara Begum and the other women present began to wail, beat their breasts, tear their hair and rend their garments... But the eunuch I'tibar Khan made a report to King Aurangzeb of what had passed, with all the details, whereby he and Roshanara Begum received great delight. (238)

Aurangzeb's reign brought a considerable decline in the charms of Delhi. Firstly, Aurangzeb remained busy with war-fields and in his destructive projects of the other religious monuments. Secondly, he preferred his own founded city of 'Aurangabad' in Deccan. Thus, Delhi, the city of court, slowly withered and lost its charms.

The Aurangzebian time was the golden time of the Fakirs. Relating the magical charms being exercised and practiced by the fakirs, Dalrymple presents the account presented by Bernier:

They tell any person his thoughts, cause the branch of a tree to blossom and to bear fruit within an hour, hatch an egg in their bosom within fifteen minutes. Producing whatever bird may be demanded, and make fly around the room. (239)

Equally amusing and baffling it seems to Dalrymple [and to us also] when Pakeezah, the librarian- the descendent line of Aurangzeb, informs Dalrymple about her aunt's living with the djinn. Pakeezah's account presents the merging of the aristocracy with the ordinary life. She, though exhibiting her royal pride, works as a librarian and takes care of her old mother [the Princess] single handedly.

Delhi summer makes William very much restless and has to remain confined within four walls during the whole afternoons as he calls them 'white-midnights', still the heat breeds some poetic sensibilities in him and he goes to describe the summer scenario in poetic terms:

The sun had just appeared over the tree line..., hinting at the furnace heat to come. Soon the kites were circling the thermals, a great helix of wide-winged bird sailing the vectors in sweeping corkscrew spirals...Noon came like a white midnight: the streets were deserted, the windows closed, the doors locked. There was no noise but for the sullen and persistent whirr of the ceiling fan. (245)

Dalrymple presents the account of his witnessing the celebration of Ramadan Id, and offering the final prayer of Ramadan at Jamma Masjid of Chandani Chawk. Here he puts forward his observation about the two major Hindustani Religions- Hindu and Islam. He notes:

I have always thought that Hinduism is at its most sympathetic and comprehensible in the countryside: a simple roadside shrine, a sacred river, a holy spring- these things are the life-blood of that great religion, whereas, Islam looks at its most impressive in a great urban cathedral mosque, especially on an occasion like Id. (251)

The occasion of the glorious celebration of Id brings forth the arrival of the caravan of Ibn Battuta of Tangier in Delhi in 1333.

Dalrymple notes this great traveler arrived in Delhi around such celebration of Id, and his diary presents the details of the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughluk. Battuta earned the position of 'Qazi' and two villages in the exchange of his gifts from Khorasan. Dalrymple goes in search of Behampur, the city of Tughluk's reign, yet another incarnation of Delhi. He finds out the Hazar Utsan - the thousand-pillared palace of Tughluk. Though in ruins at present, Dalrymple's eyes try to search and

rebuild its magnificence through Ibn Battuta's reporting.

Ibn Battuta's account of Tughluk's Delhi presents the ghastly traits of Tughluk's reign. Sultan Tughluk was so unscrupulous, ghastly and cruel towards his subjects that even though he enjoyed a favoured position of the Sultan, Ibn Battuta remained under constant frisson of the Sultan's frenzy and as he confesses "(and) every time he said any encouraging word to me I kissed his hand, until I had kissed it seven times" (258).

William Dalrymple notes down that Battuta seemed impressed by the city, which spread through the plains of around the old Hindu fort of Lal Kot. Dalrymple quotes Battuta:

"Delhi", writes Battuta "is a vast and magnificent city, uniting beauty with strength. It is surrounded by a wall that has no equal in the world, and is the largest city in India, nay in the entire Muslim Orient". (258)

The architectural monuments that stretch the glorious past to the time present are the structures of the 'Hazzar Pillars' and the 'Qutub Minar'. Though the magnificent structure of the 'Hazzar Pillars' is in ruins as William Dalrymple locates it in the emerging new cement concrete expansion of Delhi, Battuta's account presents it in its original glories:

"The third gate opens into the Thousand Pillars. It is here the sultan holds his audience... [He] sits cross-legged on a throne above the great dais while one hundred elite guards stand on either side carrying shields, swords and bows..." (257)

The walled city of Tughlukabad, as Dalrymple states, must have been a magnificent place. His expert vision inspects its grand constructions and concludes asserting its superiority:

Even today, seven hundred years after it was built, the vast walled enclosure is still an impressive sight. But at the time of Tughluks when the gridded lines of now-collapsed rubbles were bustling streets and bazaars, armouries and elephant stables, all rising up from the glittering waters of the lake, ...(265)

Dalrymple notes the magnificent structure of the tomb of Ghiyasu-ud-din Tughluk, the father of Sultan Muhammad and the creator of this impregnable complex.

William notes that the whole architectural structure had its different value too and there remained a constant thinking about the war conditions and the utility of this structure at the time of war. For this William quotes what Damascene geographer al-Umari has noted about Delhi:

“That Delhi, for all its bazaars and shrines and architectures, was above all a barrack.”

War and defense makes William think about the weapons and he opens the history of them:

SWORD: William holds it to be the superior among all the weapons. It was invented by Jamshed, the first of Monarchs. Even the proverbial saying ‘taken by the sword’ when any kingdom is taken by force, he notes, denotes its superiority over other weapons.

There are many types of swords such as Chini, Rusi, Firanghi, Shahi, Hindi and Kashmiri. He notes that among all these variety of swords the Hindi sword known as ‘Mauj-e-Dariya’ [the waves of the sea] is the most lustrous.

BOW: Relating about the bow, he notes, it was the gift of Jibrail to Adam in Paradise. Since it is from the Paradise, it is powerful, and in Paradise the blessed will practice archery.

Among the varieties of bows, William notes, the bow of Ghana is superior. It is made of horn and its aim is straight.

The second one is the Indian bow- the Kaman-I-Hindavi. This variety is made of cane. Though its arrow does not travel longer distance, it inflicts a very bad wound. He also notes about the different types of bow-string material used at different places. In central Asia horse hide is used. Hide of the ox, the horse or even the flanks of a young Nilgai are also used to make the bow strings. But he confidently states that the Rhinoceros hide would make the most superior bow-string.

In the Tughluk Sultan’s time, academic activities also acquired a considerable acceleration. William notes that as Tughlukabad was to the military of the central Delhi, the suburb of Hauz Khas was to the Savants. It is here there stood a medrese - [a college] - whose academic reputation reached far and wide. Here the learned refugees from Samarkand and the Central Asian university towns who fled from the

Mongol Conquests made their abode. And in the magnificent infrastructures not only the Islamic and Quranic studies were undertaken, the subjects like Astronomy and Medicine were also pursued with keen interests.

The medical school pursued and practiced here was 'Unani Tibbia'- origin of which traced back to Greek Hippocrates or Galen. Tracing the History of Channels through which this knowledge of unique medical practice passed, William notes:

The secrets of Unani medicine were originally passed from the Byzantine Empire to Sassanil Persia by heretic Nestorian Christians expanding the oppressive Orthodoxy of Constantinople. The exiles set up a medical school at Jundishpur, south of modern Tehrran, where their arcane and esoteric formulae were stolen by the Arabs during the early conquests of Islam. (269)

The practice, thus, in course of time, passed through different races, and got 'cross-fertilized' with the ancient medical practices of Pharaonic Egypt, Sumeria, Assyria, and Babylon- and then the Arab Scholar Ibn Sina gave it its final coding and made it a cohesive system.

William Dalrymple also probes into its principles and compares it with the Western medical practice:

While Western medicine has always tended to concentrate on the elimination of germs, ...Unani medicine emphasized aiding the body's inbuilt ability to heal itself and its ethics forbade any treatments which, while curing a specific ailment, harmed the soundness of the body as a whole. (269)

Having got his attention drawn towards this unique medical practices, and having collected the facts that such type of practices are no longer in existence where they actually originated, William feels sure that, like almost all other traditions which once visited Delhi, the city has kept them safe and alive within its life, this tradition too must have survived here. And William knows where to look for it. Yes, it is in the alleys of the old city, he notes, there are now some 1500 Hakims still practicing the century-long Byzantine medicine in Delhi, [and they appear to do thriving business, William notes] describing one such medical compartment, he writes:

Their surgeries are wonderful. Inside dark, vaulted rooms whose mahogany shelves are heavy with jars, bottles and vials, elderly white-bearded men can be seen feeling the pulse of heavily-veiled women; behind, in the shadows their assistants are busy decanting liquids like medieval alchemists: white powders are mixed with grey crystals then, slowly, crystal by crystal, dissolved in a vat of bubbling, frothing liquid. (270)

The ailment of his friend Navina offers him an opportunity to visit the Hakim Abdul Jamil Khan. His power of minute description finds its way here too. He describes the Hakim and his surgery in this vein:

The hakim was a plump, middle-aged Muslim gentleman. He wore a white kurta top over a checked lungi; he was barefoot and he kept his beard close-clipped. He was leaning back against a bolster; beneath him a frayed red mat acted as makeshift carpeting. All around the hakim- in trays, on top of cupboards, stretched out over long mahogany bookshelves- stood line upon line of cork-stoppered jars, phials and bottles. All these jars contained ground and powdered herbs of different colours and consistencies. In an enamel tray in front of the hakim lay a collection of surgical instruments which looked as if they might have escaped from the Roman atreifact room in the British Museum. (271)

In his conversations with the hakims, he brings out the facts that this knowledge has persisted in practice through generations; as he quotes the Hakim in this connection: "My father was telling me. His father told him." (273)

Scorching sun of Delhi had its severe effects on this Scottish couple. Whereas freckles had appeared on Olivia's face, William got balding effects with fast receding hair-line. To this Mrs. Puri advised him to visit Nizamuddin to pray for his disappearing hair-line. She firmly said: "The saint there is very god at solving all sorts of calamities. Mark my words. Your baldness will be reversed in jiffy" (274).

Nizamuddin interests him as his tomb is the centre of spiritual hegemony and people of all sects, casts, creeds and religions visit this shrine of Shykh with their intimate dose of devotion, faith, trust and hope to be relieved from their mundane worries with sure shot blessings and favours from the Shykh. William persuades Dr. Jaffery to accompany him to this centre of faith on one Thursday evening as it is on Thursday evening people arrive here to invoke the graces of the benevolent spirit of Nizamuddin.

Shykh Nizamuddin was, as he notes, a contemporary of Giyas- ud- Din Tughluk. He withdrew from the world and preached a simple message of prayer and renunciation. According to Shykh, the first step of Sufism was not related to the Friday prayers or empty rituals, but with the mastery of the maxim:

"Whatever you do not wish to be done to yourself, do not wish it to happen to others; wish for yourself what you wish for others also" (275).

The Saint paved his own path by serving to each and every one who came to his door, and treating all human beings as the children of God Almighty whatever religion might they follow. Secondly, he also used the power of music and poetry to move devotees towards spiritual ecstasy. This gentler doctrine of reconciliation and his message of brotherhood and musical rituals attracted towards him persons of all religions but it enraged the orthodox Mullahs. The orthodox agencies were not to let him go. They dragged him into the conflicts with the sultan Giyas-ud-Din, but the Saint had his own spiritual powers. And it is his spiritual powers that:

“The Tughluks have gone; Tughlukabad is a ruin; only Nizzamuddin remains”
(276).

Dr. Jaffery nicely explains the existence of some spiritual powers about the Saint. Showing the magnificent and architecturally rich tombs of the so called great emperors, he asks William, “Who visits those tombs except some tourists? Whereas-

It (Nizamuddin’s Tomb) is the cenotaph of a poor man who died penniless. Yet every day thousands come, and they bring with them their innermost desires. There must be something which keeps them coming, six hundred years after Nizam-ud-Din left his body. Everyone who comes here instinctively feels the presence of the saint. (285)

William himself imbibes the spiritual whiff of the shrine and experiences its ‘velvety warmth’ inside:

The tomb exuded the same thick, hushed, candlelit air of extreme sanctity that hangs over the world: the atmosphere reminded me immediately of the tomb of Saint James in Compostela or the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. (278)

William meets the caretakers of this shrine, and the direct descendants of Nizamuddin, known as ‘Pirzadas’ and collects the glimpses of their personal experiences of the holy saint. Their narration of experiences which gave them instances of the saint’s spiritual presence reminds him Ibn Battuta’s narration of such netherworld experiences in the company of the saintly Sufis of his days.

One of the major reasons behind the brutal, embittered and hostile attitudes of Sultan Muhammad Tughluk towards his subjects was the failures of one by one reform he introduced in his realm. The double tax policy, the copper currency met with humiliating failures. William quotes Zia-ud-Din Barni in this context:

When the Sultan found that his orders did not work so well as he desired, he became still more embittered against his people and began to cut them down like weeds. (292)

Sultan's anger against the public made him increase the strength and number of spies i.e. secret police, which acted to add fuels in the burning fire. Public unrest touched its peaks with the capricious decisions of the Sultan and it found its vent through as William notes, the anonymous 'reviling and insulting' notes for the Sultan thrown in the Hazar Uttan [Hundred Pillars] And this proved 'the final straw'.

In his frenzy the Sultan came to take most notorious decision of shifting the capital from Delhi to Daultabad- seven hundred miles to the south and the city's entire population of half a million was given just three days to pack up and leave. History witnessed a devastating episode as people faced unprecedented hardships, a great number of tragedies occurred on the way and only one tenth of the total number could reach the new capital. Those who did not leave Delhi were dragged to Daultabad, and the Whole Delhi was set on fire.

William visits Daultabad and inspects the things himself. Here too, in the ruins, he finds the replicas of Delhi monuments which the Delhi Wallahs had prepared to keep their nostalgic memories alive. With new generations from Delhi and other immigrants from the nearby regions, Daultabad, as William notes, too once teemed with lively cultures and prospered in the course of time William quotes Isami:

Although only one tenth of the population of Delhi reached Daultabad, they were still able to turn it into a fertile and prosperous land. (296)

But at present it is a deserted complex. In the fort William finds a small Chisti 'Khanqah' – a dervish monastery. Here at this Durgah, he happens to come across the name of Khwaja Khizr 'as the old Dervish, the Caretaker of the Durgah of Baha-Ud-din refers that the step well there was originally built by the supernatural agency of Khawja Khizr.

Now his research orients at finding the facts about this enigmatic 'Khwaja Khizr' who is associated with this city of Djinnns. After working for days in the Nehru library, he comes out with certain traits about Khwaja Khizr.

'Khwaja khizr, referred to as 'green one', was once celebrated throughout Islam.

There was no consensus about his life period among Islamic Scholars as whether he was a contemporary of Abraham who left Babel alongside the Patriarch. Some believe him to be a friend of Moses who helped guide the tribes of Israel through the Red sea. Another belief held him to be the cousin and contemporary of Alexander of Macedon. Still others claimed that Khizr was the great grandson of Shem son of Noah, that he was immortal and that his body was miraculously renewed every five hundred years.

He wore a long white beard and one of his thumbs had no bone in it. He was always dressed in green and was called 'Khizr [Arabic for green] because wherever he knelt and prayed the soil instantly became covered with thick vegetation. According to the mediaeval Islamic writers Khizr is immortal and his spirit wanders on the earth and if a pious heart calls for this help and recites his name three times with pure spirits, he would protect him from any difficulty. He lived on an island or a green carpet in the heart of the sea.

- The same 'Khizr' was claimed to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu in the Northern India, and came to be worshipped as the river god sailing on the back of a large fish.
- In Sindh, he was worshipped in the form of 'Raja Khidar' – God of Boatmen.
- In Gujarat, he was believed to be the one who haunted the market early morning and fixed the rates of several commodities.
- In Baroda, particularly this green one was worshipped to propitiate the headaches.
- Quranic commentators believed Khwaja Khizr to be the unnamed teacher in Surah XVIII who acts as a guide to Moses and attempts to teach him patience.
- The references to Khizr in the Alexander Romances of the early centuries of the Christian era are of the real origin of Khizr myth. They borrowed it from one of the most ancient poems in the world: The Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh.
- What interests William Dalrymple is that the mythical character of Khizr which originated some centuries back is still remembered and kept alive through devotion, still in the modern world.

With the help of Dr. Jaffery he goes in search of the Makhan-i-Khizr [i.e. the residence of Khizr], as its reference he finds in the book 'Muraqqa'-e Delhi'. He is wonder struck to find the place well-maintained in the wilderness of Mehauroli in the suburbs of Delhi is still utilized to invoke the Great Spirit. It is another thing that due to some unknown reasons, now the dervishes could not invoke the great holy spirits owing to their derogatory lifestyle, plunging in lust and their tendencies of cheating the gullible village folks. Here, he makes reference to the Hindu notion of 'Kaliyuga' the saga of derogation, the age of spiritual decay, to it both the Caretaker and Dr. Jaffery consented saying might it be true as everything was displaying the symptoms of decay and derogation.

Just as a perfect day Tughluk's empire too witnessed diminishing traits and loosening of reins. As Dalrymple notes, the failures of ambitious but somewhat impractical schemes made the governors of provincial regions unrest and they started rebellions and declared themselves independent. Tughluk's reaction to these rebellions was as to his nature ghastly and cruel. He started a wild play of murders and massacres.

And exactly among such chaotic social and political circumstances, Battuta notes, the Sultan decided to send a Royal convoy to the Chinese Monarch of which Battuta was designated the chief ambassador. Actually, then he was leading a life of an ascetic retreat.

Dalrymple gives the traces and the tragic fate of the convoy of Battuta and asserts how Battuta finally returned to Morocco and settled down in Fez to write his memoirs.

Dalrymple further notes down the details of the final days of Tughluk - a Sultan who witnessed great unrest during his reign and so was his death. He was on the war-field and severely threatened by the enemy. He died on 21st of Muhrram 1351. William notes another interesting fact about the Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluk that he was not buried in the Tomb he himself had got erected for his own burial. Instead, he was buried within the Tughluk mausoleum opposite the fortress of Tughlukabad. Whereas, his tomb the real monument is occupied by a certain wondering Sufi - Kabir- Ud-Din Awliya - about whom nothing is now known.

What surprises William about Delhi and about India in general is the greater reverence being attributed to the penniless Sufis than to the Sultans. His attention is magnetted towards the caravans going to Ajmer. Eventually he collects information about the Urs of Moin-Ud-Din at Ajmer and boards one such bus going to Ajmer. The bus is full of many passengers like Boob khan from Kashmir, who travel to visit the shrine of Moin-Ud-Din of Ajmer to find solution to their mundane problems. At Ajmer, he finds many people talking about their experiences of magical powers of the Saintly spirits. His desire to watch 'Wajd' is also fulfilled.

William notes down the usual Indian anxiety for rain following every summer. The heat in July is unbearable. He also mentions it is because of this scorching heat that the Mughal shifted their capitals to the cool climate of Kashmir and the Britishers to their imperial summer capital of Shimla. He, too along with Oliva, takes the train to Kalka and then takes the toy train to Shimla for three days.

On his return he finds the news of Mr.Puri's demise. He gives a minute description of mourning sessions at Mrs. Puri's household. This grief-engulfed atmosphere makes both him and Olivia home sick too. They have completed their eleven months here and now their senses crave for much familiar homely atmosphere. Before leaving, William feels pressures of completing his research. He finds it difficult to trace reliable records of the pre-Muslim Delhi. All the information now on hand is available in a very late medieval epic, *The Prithvi Raj Raso* written by the Rajasthani Bard Chand Bardai.

The epic presents the famous story of the gallant king Prithviraj, his love story with Sanujkta, the daughter of the neighbour King Jai Chand, Prithviraj's first encounter with the Muslim warlord Muhammad of Ghor. In the First war in 1191 with Ghor, Prithviraj defeated the invading army but chivalrously released Muhammad whom he had captured. But the very following year, the Turk returned with greater force and defeated Prithviraj at the battle of Taraori, thus it proved the first entry of Islam in the subcontinent.

Dalrymple tries to open the pages of *History of Delhi* even before the Chauhans. He succeeds in finding some very stray and insufficient details about the Tommar Dynasty who ruled the city from Lalkot before the Chauhans of which only one name survives that of Raja Anagpala Tomar. The credit of installing the enigmatic metal pillar which still stands, gleaming and unruined beneath the Qutub Minar goes to this Anagpala, surviving the name of Anagpals. He also finds out a pre-Muslim dam of shining quartzite in a narrow valley in the village Anangpur which is situated six miles south to the Qutub Minar. He painfully notes that nothing is clear about it and only disputed ambiguous references are found about it.

What surprises Mr. Dalrymple is on one hand no sound and clear historic evidences are available about the Tomars, but ample details available about Delhi during the time of Mahabharata. He asserts that whereas the Western epics like the *Aeneid* and *Odyssey* have turned out to be mere classics, Mahabharata of their time is still alive as a part and parcel of Indian life. He gives the parameter of its popularity by citing the case that when recently its TV adaptation was telecast on every Sunday as a weekly soap – almost entire Indian society and even the administrative system was affected by it. It gained highest TRP and even there were the cases the cabinet and corporate meetings were to be rescheduled owing to its telecast timings.

Indeed, William is impressed by this supreme piece of literature- the longest book on the earth, still his sense of history makes him wonder whether such plaintive descriptions could be true, and thus he states-

The more I read of the Mahabharata especially these sections dealing with Indraprastha – the more I longed to know how far the descriptions were factual, or if they were simply the product of Vyasa’s imagination. (325)

Such doubts lead him to professor B.B.Lal, the distinguished Indian archaeologist, who had dug a site of Indraprastha some twenty years ago.

William finds that Professor Lal is of the same opinion that nothing of the far – fetching descriptions that the Mahabharatian texts describe could be of factual value, but for its basic story-line of feudal-wars for dynastical throne. Professor Lal clearly opines, when William questions him;

William: ‘So are you saying you can’t believe anything that you read in the text of the epic?’

Prof. Lal: ‘No, I’m not saying that. But what is clear is that you can’t rely on the text alone. The only way to deal with the problem -- speaking as an archaeologist -- is to look at Mahabharata sites themselves’. (327)

Professor Lal’s study of ‘Hastinapur’ site confirms some historical facts, but what fascinates William is the wonderful ‘Maya built palace of Indraprastha’ as the text describes many wonderful things about it. To his query about its possibilities to be real, Professor Lal presents his archaeological arguments and concludes:

“The Indraprastha of Mahabharata was basically created by the pen of the poet.”

To this, William’s acute sense of humour adds:

“And destroyed by the travel of an archaeologist”. (331)

He utilizes his last afternoon in Delhi to visit the ‘Dashashwamegh Ghat’ which according to the ancient myth pertaining to Delhi was originally ‘Nigambodh Ghat’. It was here Brahma; the creator God retrieved his forgotten knowledge of the Vedas. In the first monsoon down pour, he experiences spiritual bliss and feels as if he had awakened that pre-historic time on the stream of Yamuna and wonders:

Indraprastha had fallen; six hundred years of Muslim domination had come and gone; a brief interruption by the British was almost forgotten. But Shiva, the oldest living God in the world, was still worshipped; Sanskrit- a language which pre-dates any other living tongue by millennia- was still read, still spoken. Moreover, the sadhus and rishes- familiar figures from Mahabharata- remained today, still following the rigorous laws of India’s most ancient vocations: giving up everything to wander the face of the earth in search of enlightenment; renouncing the profane in the hope of a brief glimpse of the sacred. In this wet and dishevelled figures sitting cross-legged under the neem

and banyan trees of the river bank lay what must certainly be the most remarkable Delhi survival of all. (338)

The book has set its own class and stands as a paragon of serious research a traveler undertakes as to fill up the narration. The city, that once attracts the author towards it, remains a close hunt for him. Along with his initial struggles both in settling down and to acclimatize in it, all the aspects and the historical phases that the city witnessed in the course of the history have been closely studied by the author. He leaves no stone unturned in respect to the present and the past glories of the city. He, in many of his speeches and articles, refers that today's city is not the city of its glories, but it is just an urban block which has attracted people all over India seeking employment.

The narrative voice throughout the book remains that of Anglo-centric British privileged youth who travels with least concerns of economic resources and wants to spend as much time collecting stories of his interest by investing all time, money and efforts. The narrative remains light, jovial and sustaining interest of the reader with the local or historical anecdotes or stories about the place or the point under discussion. He goes even to Pakistan to capture the glimpses of the city in minds of those who were forced to leave their beloved city on the development of critical circumstances on the partition issue.

In the interview with Tabish Khair, William Dalrymple opines that

the most interesting travel books are by the individuals who have made extended stays in places, getting to know them intimately: books like Ian Sinclair's circling of the capital in *London Orbital* or Sam Miller's *Delhi: Adventures in Megacity*. There is also Amitav Ghosh in his Egyptian village in *In An Antique Land*, or Chris de Bellaigue's magnificent recent study, *Rebel Land*, which examines the way that the ghosts of the Armenian genocide and Kurdish nationalism haunt a single remote town in Eastern Turkey.

The list which William Dalrymple enumerates can be added with his own work on Delhi, *The City of Djinn*s as here too his long stay has enabled and offered opportunities to him to understand the temperament of the city, its heritage and the public and private domains of its habitants. In the same interview, William Dalrymple quotes the words of Colin Thubron whom he labels as the most revered Travel writer of 80s and who is still at work:

The sympathetic traveller who takes time to immerse himself in a country may gain not only factual knowledge but also a sensuous and emotional understanding, and convey a people's psychology and their response to things in a way that can never be accessed studying in a library. A good travel writer can give you the wrap and weft of everyday life, the generalities of people's existence that are rarely reflected in academic writing or journalism, and hardly touched upon by any other discipline....." In the same line William has also ransacked the alleys of Delhi and brought on the surface many such issues which otherwise would have remained either unexplored or taken to be granted as ordinary and being the recurrent ones and therefore of no special importance or would just have remained limited to the learned circles only. (Dalrymple, William. Interview with Tabish Khair, 184)

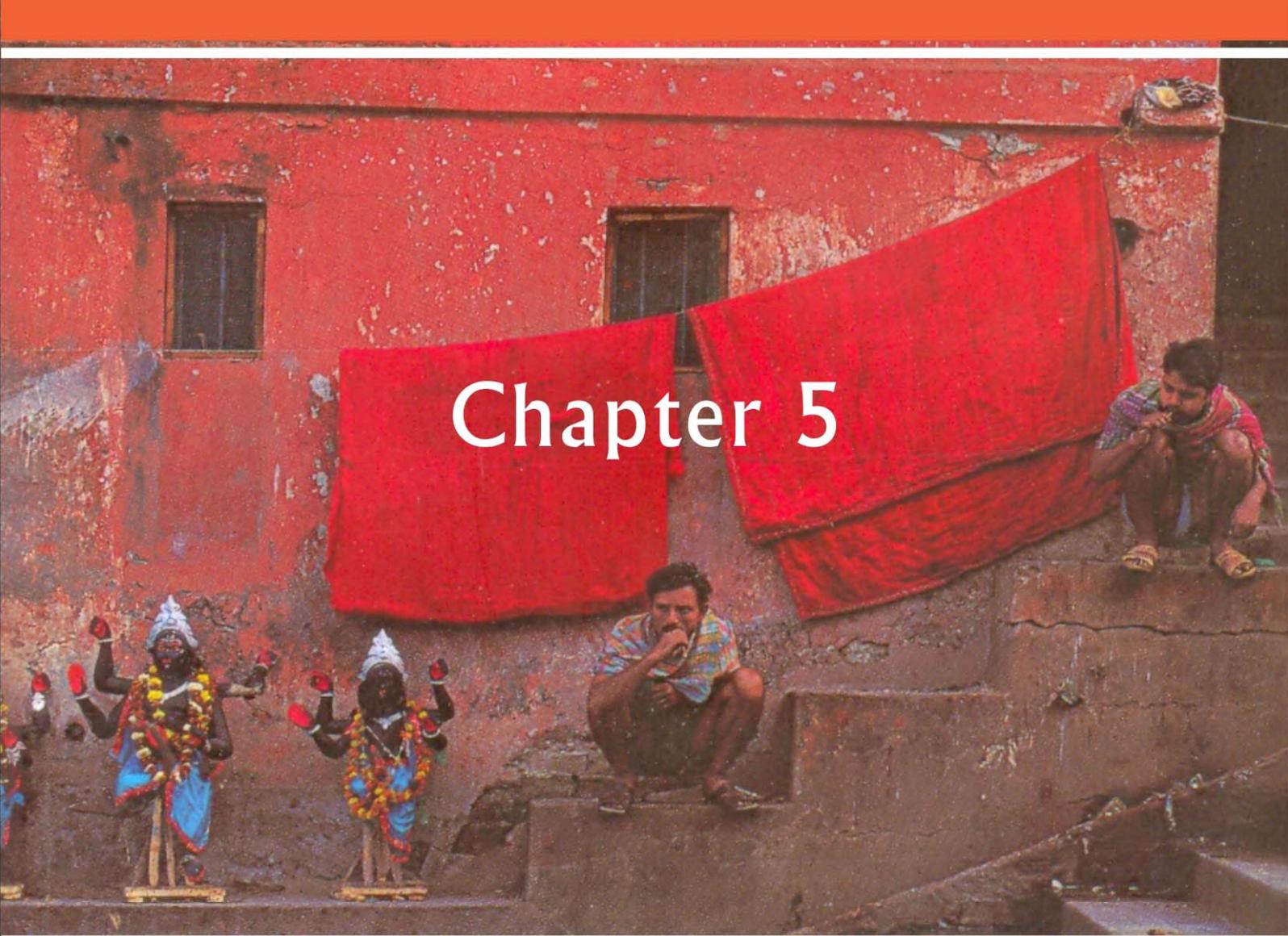
In many of his articulations William Dalrymple defends the label of the "Orientalists" that is posted on the writers, past or present, who write about the East. For this he argues in the Preface to Michael Fisher's *Anthology of European Travel Writing on Mughal India*, "Following the success of Edward Said's groundbreaking 1978 work *Orientalism*, the exploration of the East – its peoples, habits, customs and past – by European travellers has become the target for what has effectively been a major scholarly assault. 'Orientalist' has been transformed from a simple descriptive label into a term of outright academic abuse...." (Fisher, Michael H. (ed.) (2007) *Visions of Mughal India: An Anthology of European Travel Writing*. London: I. B. Tauris) In his books especially in *City of Djinnns* and *White Mughal*, his deliberations on seeking evidences in order to appropriate the Empire are conspicuous. As Paul Smethurst observes in his essay '*Post-Orientalism and the Past-Colonial in William Dalrymple's Travel Histories*':

Dalrymple might show more interest in Delhi's past than in its post-colonial present, but then in a post modern world, where futurism is on the wane, past and present flow into each other. So, as he surveys the monuments of the past in Delhi, the Red Fort, the havellis of Ballimaran, the Mughal tykhana, the British Residency in Shahjehanabad, Luytenns's New Delhi, he senses the aura of past, and the flow of time that connects it with the present. His palimpsestic approach to history is not theoretical but practical. In *City of Djinnns* he clammers through cellars and hidden passages literary to trace his way back through the accumulated detritus of fallen Empire. This is not to interpret the past to explain the present, but to understand and inhabit the past

as a dimension to the present, and to bridge that divisiveness of history which has driven a wedge between the Islamic world and the rest.

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Chapter 5

THE AGE OF KALI

INDIAN TRAVEL & ENCOUNTERS