



The ones who did not belong (A.Pothi: Talking Arts)

Muslims in Delhi: **An Endless Search For A ‘Home’**

Delhi, the vibrant capital of India is infamously reputed for overthrowing every single dynasty that tried holding its reins tight. With its first-ever reference dating back to 1020 CE as Indraprastha, the dwelling destination of Pandavas, followed by the mushrooming of 8 cities - Lal Kot, Siri, Dinpanah, Quila Rai Pithora, Ferozabad, Jahanpanah, Tughlakabad, and Shahjahanabad.

Preface

This report aims to introduce the readers, specifically the urban policy enthusiasts to the realm of urbanization that lies way beyond black and white absolutes of architecture, planning, and management. It draws onto the politico-historical aspect of community-space relations and how the geographical landscape is not just a backdrop in which life exists, it rather is the framework that becomes the source of life itself, with all its socio-cultural extensions.

What I want to see happening is that whoever reads this report, will ponder for a moment or two on the long political history before negatively stereotyping the next Muslim ghetto they step into.

SECTION 1: Introduction

Delhi: The Living History

"Once there was nothing here.
Now look how minarets camouflage the sunset.
Do you hear the call to prayer?
It leaves me unwinding scrolls of legend
till I reach the first brick they brought here.
How the prayers rose, brick by brick?"
-Agha Shahid Ali

The Rajput town was taken by the Afghan warlord Muhammad of Ghori's armies in 1192, leading to the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate (1206). The sultanate ended in 1398 when Timur invaded Delhi; the last Delhi sultan, the Lodis, made way for Babur, who established the Mughal Empire in 1526 following the Battle of Panipat. The early Mughal rulers preferred Agra as their capital, and it was not until Shah Jahan constructed the walls of Old Delhi in 1638 that Delhi became their permanent residence.

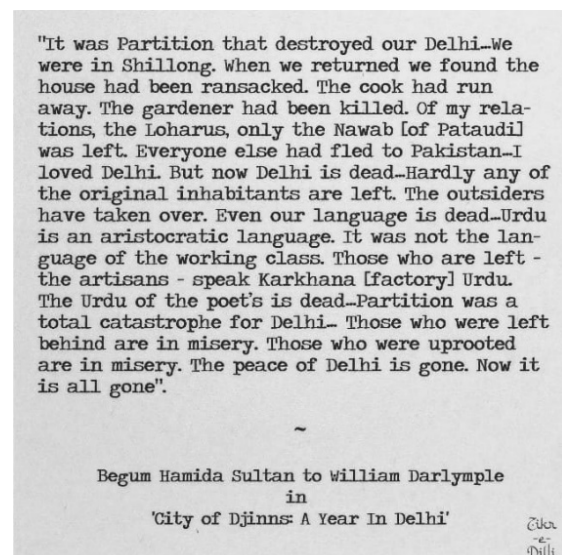


Figure 1: Partition and Delhi ("City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi" by William Dalrymple. Published 2017)

The British established rule in Delhi in the late 18th and early 19th century. In 1911, the capital was moved from Calcutta to Delhi. The area was later renamed New Delhi in 1927 and inaugurated as the new capital in 1931.

Despite getting independence in 1947, Delhi remained a point of contention, specifically due to the Partition and the multiple events that epicentered it. What always acted and still acts for and against Delhi is its heterogeneity. On one hand, the grandiosity, and the ability to generate employability attract migrants from other states to find a ‘home’ in the chaotic displays of the cosmopolis, and on the other hand, the desire to ‘fit in,’ remains a mere fruitless attempt and the urge to find a ‘home’ a distant dream with utopic base and vain future.

One such populous is that of Muslims in Delhi, who comprise the second highest majority at 12.8% only after Hindus who expand over a whopping 80.21%. Muslims in Delhi have had a long history of turmoil, which at every given epoch shaped their idea of ‘home.’

Therefore, using the idea of ‘home’ as a political vantage point, this report aims at understanding the spatial ontology of Muslims in Old Delhi, through a historical epistemological examination.

SECTION 2: Tracing Muslim Ontology in Delhi

Christopher Jaffrelot and Laurent Gayer in their book, ‘Muslims in Indian Cities: Trajectories of Marginalisation,’ elaborate on Ayesha Jalal’s idea of how post-Mughal

Indian Muslims in Delhi saw the destruction of their overlapping identification with the non-territorial (qaum/nation) and territorial (watan/state) entities, which determined their idea of being a Muslim and an Indian, preserved well during pre-Mughal dark phase beginning in 1707. This not only created an environment of alienation but also psychological homelessness, reflected well in the new genre of Urdu poetry called *sheher-e-ashob* (lament of the city) that emerged during that time. Prominent writers such as Shah Hatim, Shafiq Aurangabadi, and Mir Taqi Mir wrote poems that bear testimony to their pain of urban decay, thereby showcasing the hold community-space relationships had over their imagination of being a Muslim and an Indian.

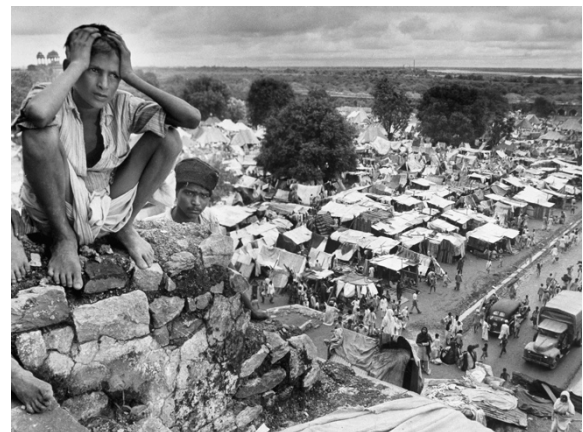


Figure 2: Refugee Camps in Delhi (Photograph by Margaret Bourke White/Life Picture Collection/Getty)

One of them is-

‘There is a city, famed throughout the world, where dwelt the chosen spirits of the age: Delhi, its name, fairest among the fair. Fate looted it and laid it desolate, and to that ravaged city I belong.’ - Mir Taqi Mir



Figure 3: Humayun's Tomb as a refugee camp (1947 Partition Archive)

Muslim Dominated Areas That Need Administration: 1803-1939

The Britishers gained control of Delhi via the Treaty of Surji Anjangaon, signed between the British East India Company and Daulat Rao Scindia in 1803.

Despite not being a Muslim-majority city, Delhi, being the seat of Mughal rule and later the British Capital along with being an omnium-gatherum of people acted as an important operational site where the constant struggle between cultural obliteration, identity preservation, occulted absorption, and resurfacing became evident as a part of the hope for a 'home' that Muslims searched for.

The gradual instillation of religion in the public sphere, made ideas about cow slaughter, the emergence of 'loyalists' and 'anti-loyalists' terminology (in the wake of 'War of Independence of 1857'), demand for self-governance and separate electorate, etc. as politically conversable topics, however, on the other hand, it removed religion from being just the 'private aspect' of life and embedded it into a new category of 'community aspect' within the larger purview of 'public sphere'. This official sanction, coupled with societal approval

and political legitimation of community-space relationships, created heterogeneous and religiously charged narratives of what Muslims empirically experience as 'home' and what they normatively ought to experience as 'home.'

Another very important extension of this community-space rhetoric provided the Muslim League the much-awaited ease to plan the carving of 'Pakistan,' a geographical area explicitly, but an implicit political and spiritual refuge for Muslims in Delhi, irrespective of which side of the border they finally chose 'at the stroke of the midnight hour.'

Muslim Zones That Need Protection: 1940-1955

Creating multi-layered divisions through categorization, enumeration, and mapping of communities and space in the name of efficient management created strong divisions between public space and community space by confining people and their practices within demarcations, inhabited by a particular community. As a result, notions such as 'Hindu-dominated' and 'Muslim-dominated' developed. This further created a political and administrative category called 'Muslims' which post-independence got strongly associated with the contested idea of a Muslim homeland in 'Pakistan,' and as a result those who came under this category seemingly lost their claims on the 'Indian space.' Even the ones, who chose to stay in India were treated no more than residuals being competed for by political parties, with parallel but intersecting aims. Right from the time when 62,000 refugees and 63,000 refugees were confined in Purana Qila and Humayun's Tomb respectively,

both the Indian and Pakistani Emergency Committees regarded Muslims in these refugee camps as the responsibility of each other, with the former arguing based on sheer assumptions that all Muslims want to stay in Pakistan and the latter considering it India's duty to protect them in all cases.

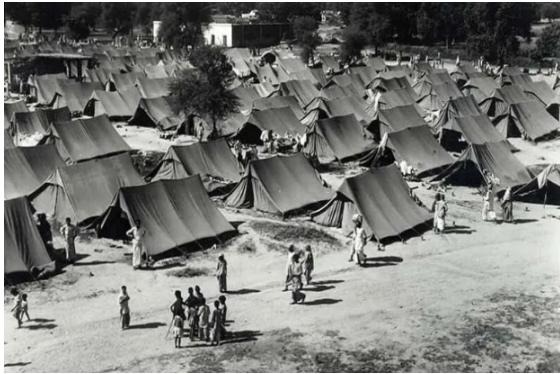


Figure 4: *The ones who did not belong* (A.Pothi: Talking Arts)

Therefore, what we can say is that these refugee camps and this state of being a refugee, acted as a temporal moment of departure from where began the long crisis of their 'North Indian Muslim Identity,' posing a concomitant choice between their religious identity, to be transforming into a nation called Pakistan, and their national identity of being in India, a country yet to be firmly established as a democratic and secular space.

This dilemma of Indian Muslims was further consolidated with the gradual emergence of administratively unclear and politically provocative spatial categories called 'Muslim zones' or 'Compact Muslim Blocks' as the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation mentioned in its office memorandum in November 1947. These areas were recognized under the Evacuee Property Act (1950), under which Sikhs and Hindus coming from West Punjab were

moved into the properties of Muslims from Muslim minority areas such as Sabzi Mandi, Karol Bagh and Paharganj who left for Pakistan. The Mixed area Muslims who chose to stay in India either moved to Muslim-majority areas or refugee camps. This carved out geographical spaces concentrated with Muslims, which were further recognized by Nehru as areas to be 'protected from violence,' although later this act was amended and Hindus and Sikhs were allowed to settle in these Muslim majority areas to allow intermixing.

No matter, these homogenized areas viewed from the standpoint of 'Nehru's melting point' thesis were nothing more than temporary measures to protect the community and eventually integrate them into an India-specific secular --modern framework, and the act did get amended four years later in 1954, the kind of unsaid 'us' vs 'them' caricaturing intensified to an extent that these areas came to be described as 'mini-Pakistans', establishing them as strong markers of Indian Muslim identity. The subsequent communal violence transformed these areas into 'communally sensitive areas' and more generally into 'Muslim ghettos.'

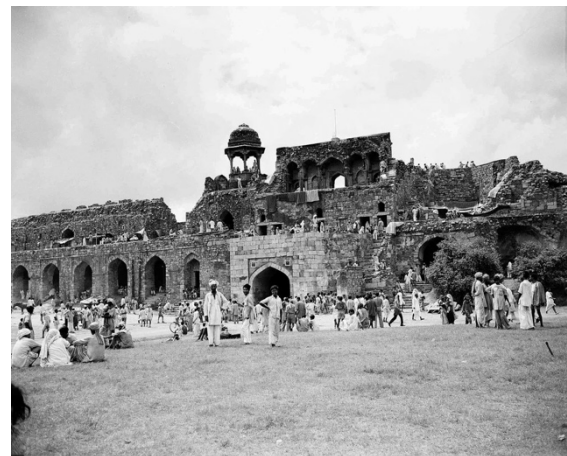


Figure 5: *Max Desfor, AP Photos*

What was parallelly running in stark contrast to this was the narrative of ‘Hindu Rashtra,’ which at least till the 1950s was expressed as the demand for ‘Akhand Bharat’, continued to refer to Pakistan concerning Indian Muslim identity, not only marking Muslim residential areas as bizarrely situated usurped territories within the sacred Hindu space but also as spaces of collective guilt.

In the later years, this allegation gradually started characterising Muslim dominated spaces as symbols or urban category of separatism. The proponents of both ideas - secular India and Hindu Rashtra, expected the Muslim community to leave aside their religious affiliation to join the country’s mainstream, thereby completely breaking free the intertwining of Ayesha Jalal’s Muslim identity and Indian identity as mentioned before.

This question of the Indian-ness of Muslim identity in this sense was never dissociated from the idea of Pakistan. Muslims just became political imperatives for India’s secular face.

Mini Pakistans That Need Indianization: 1955-1970

Once these areas became structured as ‘others,’ stereotypes related to their constitution started worsening the situation. The major issue in this regard came from the sale of meat, and its confinement to certain areas of the city with the enactment of acts banning and ultimately making cow slaughter a punishable offense under the Cow Slaughter Act, of 1857. The upper caste, and Hindu sensibilities of vegetarianism created binaries of food production, sale, and consumption. Food

transcended being simply a dietary choice, a cultural practice, and a source of commercial activity, to becoming a demarcation between Hindus and Muslims. The point to note here is that the vegetarian Hindu perception fitted only the ‘upper caste Hindus’ as several Hindu communities such as Balmikis and Khatiks were traditionally involved in the meat business. This reflects Gramsci’s idea of the state being a realization of power relations between dominant classes. And spaces became contested zones where confinement could be imposed upon the powerless by the powerful, which not only controlled bodies spatially but also biologically in a way that censorship was imposed upon where the ‘other’ live and what they eat, thereby indicating the differential treatment of the two biologically.



Figure 6: Meat shop in Delhi (Source-India Today)

Backwards Who Need Assistance To Modernise : 1970-1977

After having been limited spatially and stereotyped, the Muslim-dominated areas re-emerged as a deeply contested category in the political and social life of Delhi in the wake of the two wars with Pakistan (1965 and 1971). This was primarily a result of three factors - growing obsession with clearance, re-development, re-settlement, and population control for modernization,

urge to ‘Indianize minorities’ to reclaim the lost Bharatiya heritage and cater to the issues of nationalism, national security, and national identity in the wake of the Indo-Pak wars.

These three factors conglomerated to redefine Muslim spaces and pose them as anti-development, anti-national, and



Figure 7: Clearance Drives in Delhi (Source-Times of India)

backward. This was done by two methods working together - massive clearance and re-settlement drives in Muslim-dominated areas and promises of favourable residential and commercial allotments post-demolition as an incentive to sterilize them. Through these two goals were attained - bulldozing their presence leading to socio-economic hampering - a passive push to the eradication of the present, and controlling their growth by setting arbitrary reproduction limits, in the name of consensual drives - again a passive push to eliminating the possibility of future. the state and local levels, Jan Sangh, and the opposition were together in these atrocities against Muslims during the Emergency.

Quite interestingly, Old Delhi Muslim residential areas were exposed to massive clearance operations, whereas almost all the

unauthorized colonies in Delhi, inhabited primarily by Hindu and Sikh refugees were regularized. While sterilization drives



Figure 8: Rukhsana Sultan (Source - Times Of India)

during emergencies were conducted either in local dispensaries or hospitals, Dujana House was the only camp that was placed in a residential area in Delhi. Rukhsana Sultan (reportedly told by Sanjay Gandhi – ‘You are a Muslim, go into the walled city’), a boutique owner turned social activist is said to have single-handedly motivated a whopping 13,000 vasectomies in the hypersensitive ‘walled city’ area of Delhi with the family planning program and resettlement scheme, culminating in Turkman Gate riots, India’s closest post-independence reliving of the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre. In this regard, 26-year-old Firoza, a seamstress, says *‘My husband had tuberculosis but they refused to take him to Pant Hospital till he got himself sterilized. He never really recovered.’*

This systematic internment of Muslims in pockets in Delhi was portrayed as a medium to bring them out of their ‘anti-development,’ ‘anti-establishment,’ and; anti-nation modernization’ mindset. That is how the collective grievances of a local community were turned into a communal conspiracy against the state and its development agenda.

This is how the competitive electoral politics not only shaped the Muslim identity and space but also turned these pockets into sites that had to be kept contentious to be significant in the mad rush for power in the newly born ‘free’ democracy called India.

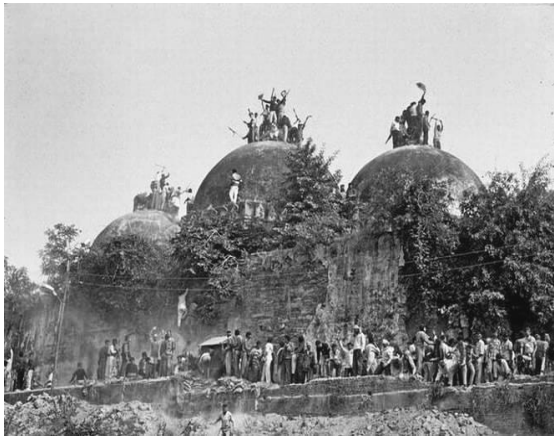


Figure 9: Babri Masjid demolition (Source : Times of India)

Lesser citizens: The terrorists of India: 1990 - 2007

This broad period saw groundbreaking political events that shaped the way Muslims were perceived and the way Muslims started perceiving themselves. The first was the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992, followed by the Gujarat pogrom in 2002, the Batla House encounter in 2008, and the Muzaffarnagar riots in 2013.

This epoch was definitive in how religious politics became recognized by Muslims, who had to prove their love and loyalty for India repeatedly. A new terminology of ‘Muslim terrorists’ emerged who were seen as a source of danger. This period not only solidified Muslims finding psychological comfort amongst people of their community but also impacted their idea of home. They had to prove at every point that they were not traitors. This had two major

repercussions, one being the fact that Indian Muslims started viewing themselves as lesser citizens who were looked at with suspicion leading to the creation of spaces where they preferred living with their community people, who would not stereotype them. Secondly, this confinement of Muslims in certain areas away from Hindu-dominated ones prevented optimal collective participation



Figure 10: Gujarat Pogrom (Source: The Caravan)

of Muslims in societal activities, thereby portraying them as non-contributing and disloyal citizens with devalued civic virtues, thus in turn covertly justifying segregation and deficit citizenship of and to Muslims.

The Ones Who Do Not Belong: ‘Ghar Wapsi’: 2019 - Present

The immensely controversial Citizenship Amendment Bill was passed in the



Figure 9: Anti CAA Protests at Jama Masjid, Old Delhi, Source: The Week

Parliament in 2019. The Act was and still is, despite not being implemented yet, a source of controversy. The Act which stipulates the provision of citizenship offers amnesty to non-Muslim illegal immigrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, thereby overturning the 64-year-old Citizenship Act which prohibited such grants. This comes with the eventual National Registration of Citizens under NRC. Historian Mukul Kesavan said the law is *"couched in the language of refuge and seemingly directed at foreigners, but its main purpose is the delegitimization of Muslims' citizenship"*. This law seeks to provide citizenship to a certain section of people who are not even registered under NRC based on their religion and excludes persecuted Muslims from outside, for example, Ahmadis in Pakistan and Rohingyas in Myanmar.



Figure 10: Anti-CAA Protests in Delhi, Source: Feminism In India

Also defending the bill earlier this year, R. Jagannathan, editorial director of Swarajya magazine, wrote that *"the exclusion of Muslims from the ambit of the bill's coverage flows from the obvious reality that the three countries are Islamist ones, either as stated in their constitutions, or because of the actions of militant Islamists, who target the minorities for conversion or harassment"*. This flows out of and merges

into the popular narrative about Muslims being terrorists.

This law outrightly creates graded citizenship. Just like the previous epochs, Muslims have implicitly been explained their spatial limits within India, but unlike the previous epochs, which delimited Muslims only nationwide, they are this time, shown what place they hold beyond the borders as well.

This Act was followed by protests, which ravaged the National Capital, painting it red in Muslim blood. A single National Act, percolated local circuits, increasing stereotyping and segregation like never before. Ever since time and again, political parties and nationalist organizations have used multiple mediums, from election campaigning to theatrical releases to portray Muslims as the 'other who do not belong here', giving rise to concepts like - 'ghar wapsi', 'love jihad' etc.

SECTION 3: Community-Space Relations: Stories of 'Home' From Dilli-6

'Delhi has died so many deaths' – Narayani Gupta



Figure 11: Muslim kids offering 'namaz'(Source: The Caravan)

Drawing upon interviews conducted as a part of field trips to Old Delhi for *'Making Place for Muslims In Contemporary India'* by Kalyani Devaki Menon, one can decipher that while the theoretical transition of Shahjahanabad to Delhi, and later New Delhi and Delhi-6 was quick, these changes daunted heavily on the Muslims residing in this area. What began in 1803 (the year the British formally overtook Delhi) as an inconvenience in adjusting to a new rule, shaped itself into a constant subconscious juxtaposition between pre-colonial and post-colonial life by the Indian Muslims to make sense of their history, present relevance, and prospects, thereby developing narratives on their identity, making community-space dilute a pivot around which a plethora of newly emerged ideas of 'home' revolved.

Pre-colonial Muslims as Khurshid Alam and Hammad Nazir Zaki mention - 'enjoyed being at the power centre hence their aesthetic sense was the dominant mode of the representation of the Indian subcontinent,' Post-colonial Muslims lost this relatability, in the public sphere and the personal sphere, their interpersonal relations with Hindus, which were once, as Amir Sahib (interlocutor 1) expressed, a reflection of *'Ganga-Jamuni' culture of Shahjahanabad'*, became disputed.

Narratives of denizens like Aamir Sahib who bemoan the loss of the beautiful bond



Figure 12: Qazi leading the prayer (Source: Indian Express)

that communities in the Mughal times shared are more than just nostalgia for an imagined past. They are a narrative that makes place for Muslims in contemporary India, by situating them as vital elements of the 17th century, Hindustan, where political belonging transcended one's religious affiliations and cultural traditions and friendships were beyond the faith one was born into. In narrating such oral histories, people like Aamir Sahib create a space for Indian Muslims by tracing the secular historiography of India, wherein upper-caste Hindu sensibilities were not the normative way of living and majoritarian politics had not extracted the commitment to serve the people from leaders, wherein overlaps and not difference, unlike today was the analytical tool to understand politics and people.

The origination of this identity struggle and strive to find a home began with the blurring of the public-private divide in terms of religious discussions and the 'War of Independence-1857' exacerbated it, wherein the British, schooled in their stereotypes about Muslims, constructed the revolt as a religious war, casting Muslims as the "fanatics who orchestrated it" (Making Place For Muslims in Contemporary India 2022). This led many families to start lives in other parts of Delhi such as Nizamuddin or Mehrauli, or moving to other cities in North India. (Farooqui 2010, 4; Bose and Jalal 2004, 74). Later, it was 1947, which marked the turning point in the city's history.

More than two-thirds of the Muslims in Old Delhi were lost during the violent division of India, which was ostensibly done on religious lines (Modern South Asia Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal). According to

Laurent Gayer, as many Muslim families moved to Pakistan, Delhi's Muslim population decreased from 33.22 percent in 1941 to 5.71 percent in 1951 (2012, 217). The study of "**The Long Partition**" by **Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar (2007)** reveals a violent and intricate story of this movement. She poignantly maintains that preconceived ideas of nation and belonging were not the reason behind the exodus of Muslims from Delhi to Pakistan, rather, violence is the background to explain this large Muslim departure from Delhi—20,000 Muslims lost their lives and 44,000 were displaced during the bloodshed that accompanied the partition of Delhi. This is clear from the arguments made by **Rafiq Sahib (interlocutor 2)** when asked, *'Why did people move to Pakistan?'*. He says, *'People considered going to Pakistan because they were met with suspicion when they applied for work in India. But you are Pakistani people would say.* However, this differential treatment was not just limited to 1971, when the Indo-Pak borders closed. **Ameena Baji (interlocutor 3)**, recounted one such instance in late 1999. She says –

'One day I wanted to pierce my daughter's ears..... He (the ear piercer) said to me, "What are you doing here? Go away from here to Pakistan. When you have been given a place, why don't you go there? What are you doing here?'

Zamindar explains that although a population transfer between Punjab and Bengal had been accounted for in the faulty partition plan, it had not considered the 323,000 Hindu and Sikh refugees who came to Delhi from Pakistan (Zamindar 2007, 28). They took over the vacated properties of Muslims in Muslim minority

areas, following the Evacuee Property Act (1950), leaving the latter to settle down in Muslim majority areas with their relatives, or else being pushed to rot within the concrete walls of a refugee camp in Purana Qila or Humayun's Tomb. With both Indian as well as Pakistani governments refusing to pay heed to them, because they considered their decision to stay on either side of the border as a transient move, rather than a permanent choice, these 'administrative and social residues' in the name of 'security' were grouped up in areas, which came to be known as 'Muslim zones,' 'Muslim ilaqe,' 'Muslim ghettos' and 'Mini-Pakistans.'

Later, the 1975 Emergency which was marked by widespread censorship, opposition arrests, and the suppression of fundamental civil rights, used forced sterilization campaigns and violent property demolitions, garbed within its 'modernization, security and re-development' narrative, against Muslims. Extreme state violence was used in response to protests against sterilization and demolitions at Dujana House and Turkman Gate in Old Delhi. Thousands of people were harmed or killed, women were sexually assaulted, and state officials looted homes (Tarlo 2003, 38–41). People lost their homes and were moved to one of the 47 resettlement sites outside of Old Delhi.



Figure 15: Muslim ghettos, (Source: BBC)

Tarlo argues, *“What these people lost in 1975 was not so much their ancient homes, which they had already lost, but rather their location in the heart of the Muslim community of the Old City. It was a loss of locality”* (Tarlo 2003, 143).

This was followed by feelings of alienation during the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992, the Gujarat Pogrom in 2002, the Muzaffarnagar Riots in 2013, Batla House encounter in 2007, getting exacerbated by the 2020 Delhi riots, wherein open calls for ‘killing and throwing out protestors, majority of whom were Muslim students’ were made by politicians. Rafiq Sahib even mentions his concern about sending his children outside Old Delhi, especially to college-

“Now every man is scared to send his children anywhere. They will be caught.... The fear settles inside them.... If you catch a Muslim in a place where something has happened- a blast has happened - if the name is Muslim, then the police have solved their problem. Whatever he was or not he is accused of being a terrorist.... Terrorist? Who is a terrorist? One who is caught? Those who are in an encounter? They have been called terrorists and killed.”

In this context, we are reminded of what Nicholas de Genova argues, *“The terrorist’ menace is the state’s.....most perfect and ideal enemy, whose banal anonymity and phantasmagorical ubiquity prefigure and summon forth the irradiation of the every day by the security state as our savior and redeemer. The spectacle of terror is inseparable from a spectacle of security.”*

This polarising portrayal of Muslims as John Ashcroft’s ‘spectre of the enemy,’ that

lurks among ‘us,’ and ‘live in ‘our’ communities – planning, plotting, and wanting to ‘kill’ has three major repercussions – A Security State strengthens on the very feeling of insecurity created amongst people.

Muslims creating a spatial logic that constructs them as ‘out of place’ in New Delhi, simultaneously marking Old Delhi as a Muslim place or what Loic Wacquant would describe as *‘socio-spatial formation born out of the forcible relegation of a negatively typed population.’* For example – Aameena Baji removes her burqa in the metro to New Delhi and dons it back home. For her Old Delhi is a place where she can be Muslim – one who is in fact more comfortable in a burqa for reasons of piety, privacy, and cultural politics. In New Delhi, she feels compelled to eschew her personal preferences to pass, to have a place, to have the same privileges of citizenship that others command, to have security, and to belong.

Muslims construct Old Delhi as their place through everyday practices, be it the call of *azaan* five times a day or the daily siren signaling the end of the fast during Ramzan (AUDITORY), celebrating festivities, men and women dressed in traditional, goats tied outside homes, chopping on leaves and being fattened for Eid sacrifice, or **Zafar Sahib’s (interlocutor 4)** cousin who writes a Quranic verse every day on the blackboard at the entrance of the street after fajr (morning prayer) (SIGHT), the smell of *Nihari* and *Korma* bubbling in large pots and freshly baked *Khamiri Roti*, filling the atmosphere on a foggy day in January (OLFACTORY), people embracing each other after offering the Eid prayer, women applying *Henna* on each other’s palms on

Chaand Raat (the night before Eid) (TOUCH), the constant hunt for *Eidi* (a token of blessing given by elders to kids on Eid) and the tastiest *Sheer-Khurma* in each other's home early morning by the Mohalla kids (TASTE). All this creates a material force in the form of local subjects who make their locality – a cultural, psychological unit – which 'secures' them against strident majoritarianism on the one hand, but on the other hand, 'secures' them in particular places, thereby viciously marginalizing them on the national landscape.

And therefore, people like **Abida (interlocutor 5)**, organize into groups such as the 'Muslim Club' to propagate the righteous Islamic teaching, premised on the holy Quran. People like Abida, try to live with security in Old Delhi, but not be 'secured' within its boundaries. They aim to negotiate religious self and national identity as plurals existing between contradictory pulls, conflicting ideas, competing hegemonies, and complex socio-political forces, to create a moral geography of their own. This also leads to the breaking of several stereotypes that non-Muslims leading to the fostering of unity. This cultural labyrinth that Old Delhi presents in terms of a unique Muslim culture is a hot spot for tourists from and beyond India.

Conclusion

On being asked the purpose behind writing the classic novel, 'Twilight in Delhi,' Ahmed Ali replied –

“It is a lament of the colonial intrusion of native Muslim's cultural aesthetics – I wrote it to discover my own identity which had been lost in the process of colonial subjugation.”

On analysing the aforementioned time frames, we can say that spaces do not just act as silent spectators or moot backgrounds in which life operates. Rather they are a source of life themselves, providing geographical cartography, cultural aesthetics, administrative moves, power dynamics, and enough room for interpersonal relations to prosper or deteriorate, thereby not only shaping one's identity, assertion, and resistance but also one's civilizational dialogue with those heading the states.

Therefore, as the socio-political embedding changes, the people residing in it also experience a change in the way they perceive themselves, and that interminably impacts the way they make sense of their surroundings, consequently determining their idea of 'home.'

On that account, drafting and implementing spatial policies for creating more inclusive and encompassing spaces is the prerequisite to the realization of the broad idea of urban transition. Unity in diversity can definitely act as a strong theorization of India's foundational principles, but urban spatial plans can embed the true diversity in India's unified social geography.

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