

Cover page by Vanshika Agarwal
Photos by Yuvika

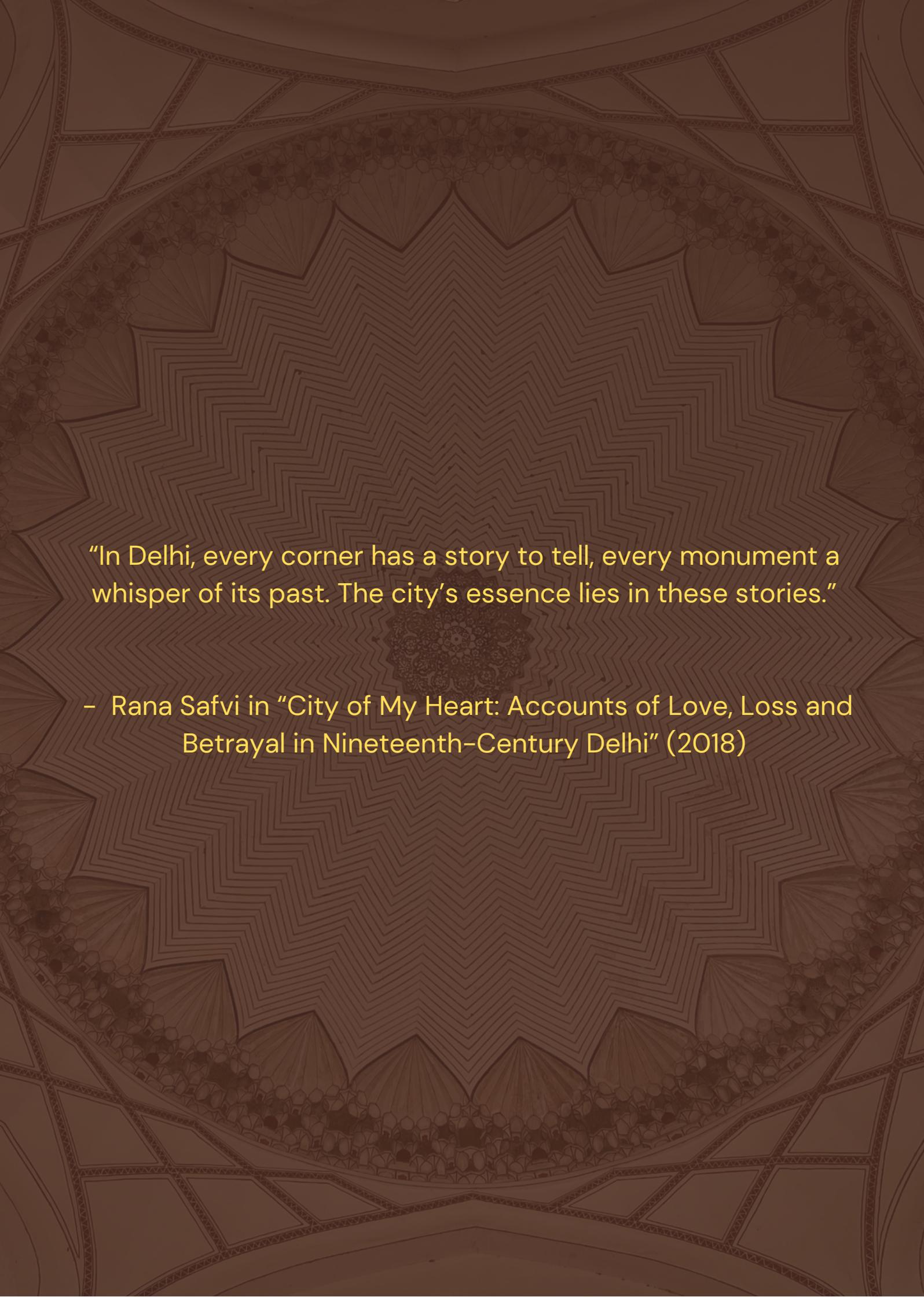
ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ
ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ
ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ
Delhi ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ Delhi ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ Delhi ਦਿੱਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ ੱਲਲੀ

meraki

ANNUAL MAGAZINE
2022-23

delhi

LOG, SAMAJ AUR BADLAV



“In Delhi, every corner has a story to tell, every monument a whisper of its past. The city’s essence lies in these stories.”

– Rana Safvi in “City of My Heart: Accounts of Love, Loss and Betrayal in Nineteenth-Century Delhi” (2018)



EDITORIAL

N O T E

"Between unmanageable crowded Ghats, markets, and traffic lie the northern plains of the centuries-old nerve center of India called the City of Djinn, now known as Delhi."

- William Dalrymple

Delhi - a land which holds within itself the history of seven cities - is the epitome of constant change and dynamism. Its people, culture, history, politics, infrastructure and many more aspects are constantly being restructured and reinvented through the multifaceted structural processes that operate in it. Systemic processes in modern times such as Colonialism, Liberalization, Modernisation, Globalization, Post-Colonialism have shaped and reshaped the identity of Delhi. As the systemic processes are not static, the idea of Delhi is also ever changing and dynamic. There is no singular conceptualization that can define Delhi; it exists uniquely in every imagination, shaped by the subjective experiences of each individual.

In this edition of Meraki, we aim to explore the myriad elements that breathe life into the dynamic city of Delhi. The magazine comprises of 3 sections - Delhi as a City, Delhi as an Idea and Delhi as a Site for Political Representations and Contestations. Each section aims to reveal the various subjective realities that constitute the Delhi experience through different techniques.

M E R A K I

The first section of Meraki highlights the characteristic features of the city's experience. This section includes numerous articles, poems and diary entries which showcase the uniqueness of the metropolitan produced by both its material and non-material aspects. Analysis of fashion in the city, discussions on Delhi's culture, navigating public spaces and experiences of commuting through DMRC are some distinctive themes which are addressed in this section.

The second section, on the other hand, focuses on the multitudinous subjective experiences of the city. These experiences and perceptions are determined by the multilayered identities of individuals and the socio-economic, cultural, political positions they occupy. Gender, political ideology, class, caste, region are some of the structural identities in focus. Interviews, poetry and diary entries are featured in this section to bring forth such subjective experiences.

The last section of Meraki locates Delhi as a site for political action, both the manifestation of political struggles and contestations in contemporary times. It intends to bring forth the different ways in which dissent and resistance are expressed in the city such as through the medium of graffiti art, the use of public spaces such as parks. It also deliberates on the complications that arise within the legal and political framework of the city especially that of high rates of crime.

The Meraki team has worked very hard to bring to life this year's theme and vision. This magazine is indeed a true expression of Meraki, an exercise carried out with love and creativity. We hope this exploration of Delhi helps you in understanding the city in a nuanced way and brings out the multi-structured realities that constitute the city's experiences. In the end, we would like to thank Dr. Devika Mittal and Dr. Sabiha Mazid for giving us their helpful advice and guiding us at every step of the way. We hope you enjoy going through the magazine, as much as we enjoyed making it!



CONTENTS

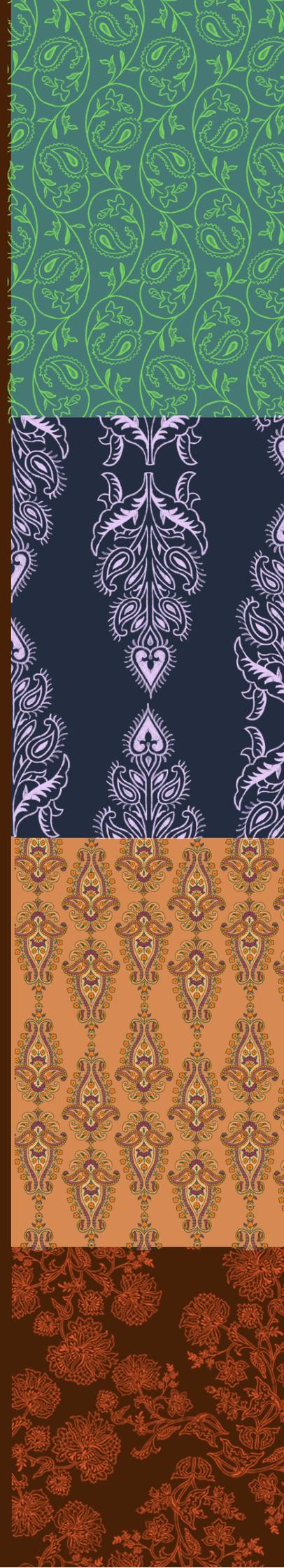
DELHI AS A CITY

- 1. Welcome to Delhi** 02
By Yashvi Arora
- 2. Where is my Delhi?** 05
By Shreya Mishra
- 3. Fashion through a sociological lens** 06
By S. Ananya
- 4. Forty-five minutes of Solitude: The DMRC** 11
By Agnes Riya Rodrick
- 5. Delhi as a cultural centre** 14
By Sumedha Vashista

6. **Gender, Crime, and Safety: Navigating the Landscape of Gender-Based Violence** 18
By Mehak Bansal

DELHI AS AN IDEA

7. **The Plasticity of the Delhi Experience: Looking at the City from the Inside Out and the Outside In** 21
By Aanya Sharma
9. **My Delhi** 33
By Saanya Sodhi
8. **A Walk** 37
By Sylvia Maria Dominic



10. **Wonder How She Smiled?** 38

By Akshina Ghosh

11. **Home** 40

By Sylvia Maria Dominic

12. **A Diary Entry** 41

By Lavanya Chaturvedi

**DELHI AS A SITE OF
POLITICAL
REPRESENTATIONS AND
CONTESTATIONS**

13. **Graffiti and Resistance: The Politics of Street Art in Delhi** 43

By Adya Manchanda

14. **Public spaces,
Obscenity laws and the
Policing of Affection** 46

By Anushmita Mitra

15. **Delhi's Rising Crime
Tide** 49

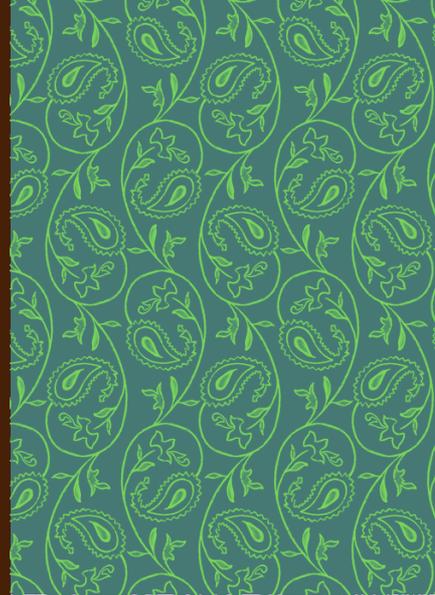
By Niyam Shyjo

16. **Understanding "Delhi" with
Professor Sanjay Srivastava** 52

Interviewed by Hitika Kalra

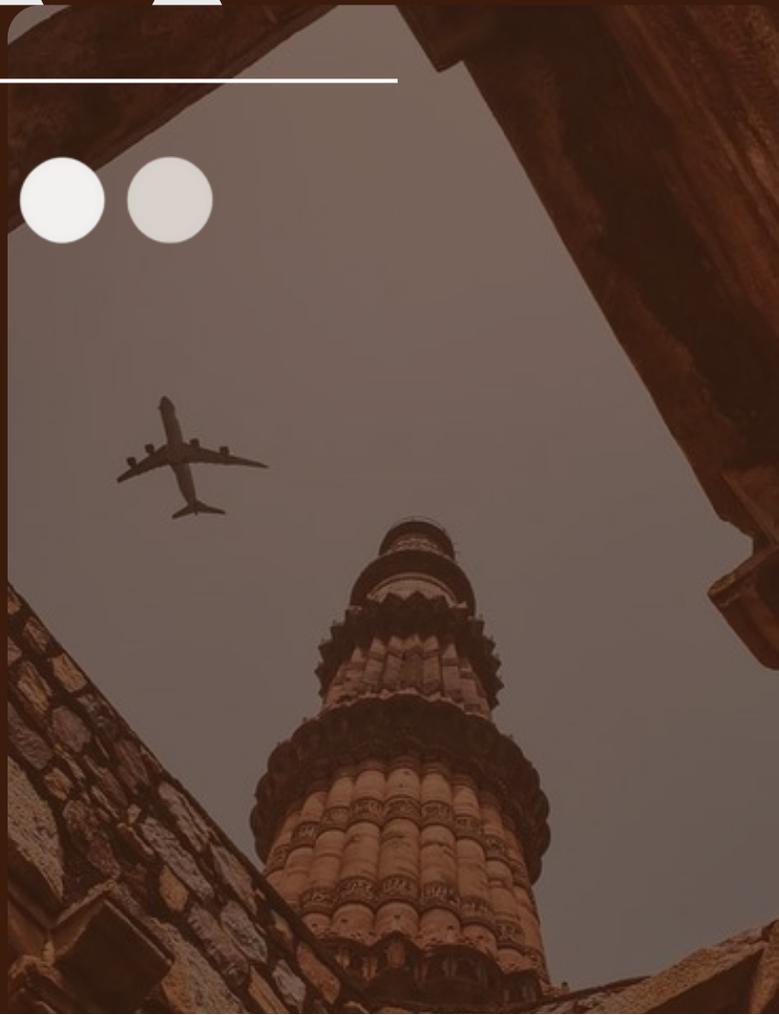
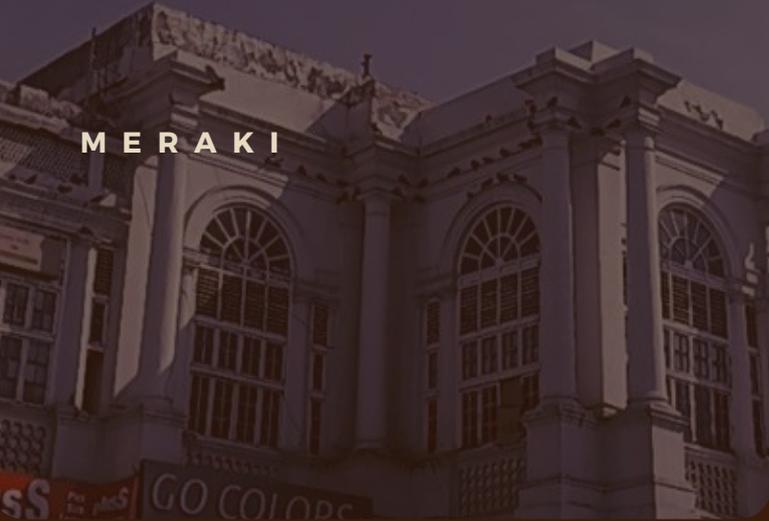
17. **What have you heard
about Delhi?** 59

Reflections from Interactive Board



MERAKI

DELHI AS A
'CITY'





DELHI AS A CITY

"Delhi is not a city but a series of cities, each superimposed on another. It is a city of contrasts: ancient and modern, rich and poor, sacred and profane. It is a city that defies easy description."
– Rana Safvi, author and historian.

This section of Meraki intends to expand upon the idea of how Delhi exists as a city highlighting the various static and dynamic; material and non-material realities that are taken to be characteristic of the city providing a critical commentary of the same to capture the essence of the city's existence in totality.

Filled with thought-provoking and expository articles, poems and diary entries the section takes us on a journey filled with nostalgic episodes through the Delhi Metro, a sociological commentary on fashion that is seen to be regarded as that typical of a Delhiite, a poem that brings out the contradictions and ironies manifested in the history and even the spatial division of the city, articles that highlight the rich cultural diversity that the city offers which has made it earn the title of 'Dilwalon ki Dilli' to articles that comment upon its existence as an urban centre and the hustle bustle that is characteristic of its metropolitan existence.

Delhi as a city, therefore, takes us through the distinctive markers that make up Delhi all the while addressing the issues, paradoxes and material realities that are a part and parcel of the city life.

WELCOME TO DELHI

By Yashvi Arora

The capital, the cultural hub, and the soul of our country, Delhi, is my favorite place. Delhi is not just another geopolitical sphere of the world; it is a way of life. People from all castes and classes have found their home in this fabulous and empowering city. This small geographical body, rather insignificant in the world's vastness, is still a gold mine to many. With remarkable healthcare in world-class hospitals like Indraprastha Apollo, brilliant education centers, beautiful tourist spots, and flavor-rich food, Delhi has a place for everyone, both tourists and residents alike. This city is enriched with the people of different parts of the country who find their home away from home here, expanding the Delhiite culture of food, clothing, festivities, traditions, and values adding to the already existing vibrancy and strengthening our unity through acceptance of diversity.



Photo by Yuvika

This metropolitan city with its state-of-the-art infrastructure and technology still hasn't left its roots or dismissed its traditions, in Delhi the rapid changes of the globalizing world and the inherited heritage co-exist as one. Delhi depicts her rich historical pride with monuments like the 'Laal Kila' and 'Qutub Minar', by offering Indian delicacies like 'chaat' and 'jalebi' on every street corner, selling traditional handicrafts in Dilli Haat, and yet has a swiftly developing IT sector, westernized clothing stores in frenzied malls, altering taste buds for 'sushi' and plates of pasta and the ever-developing technologies. Due to this trifle of times, our culture is amalgamated, and that is the beauty of Delhi, a love story of modern and traditional.

Delhi sees a dream more than any caste, class, or ethnic boundaries. The best figurative weapon that the city has to offer is, anonymity. The brutal caste system still practiced in various parts of the country leaves its victims suppressed and poverty-stricken, but this buzzing city life of Delhi overlooks those ancient boundaries and sees an individual

first, who is ready to work hard and make their mark on the world. Delhi offers employment and job opportunities to everyone alike, caste or religion no bar.

Of course, it is not a perfect dreamland, the suffocated lungs, the hectic traffic, the streetside petty fighting and the consequences of being a woman resident all shun in your face and blur the beauty of this city. But it is the people who make it worthwhile. The people who never stop fighting for what they believe in, fueled with patriotism and their passion for equal rights and liberty. Delhi has been a hub of youth movements, environmentalist protests, pride parades, peasant and workers' movements, etc. This city displays the true spirit of democracy and freedom of expression. The feisty and righteous citizens are the reason behind the rapidly growing changes. This city has given a platform to people from all backgrounds to voice their needs to our government. Along with this, the 'Rashtriyapati Bhawan' and the Supreme Court looking over us, Delhi is also a place for a frequent socio-political showdown.

M E R A K I

With this much going on in one minuscule piece of land, you can never get bored of Delhi. From the chaotic galis of 'Chandani Chowk' to the tranquility of 'Sanjay Van', from the bustling circles of 'Connaught Place' to the spirited Akshar Dham', 'Bangla Saheb' and 'Jama Masjid', this city has it all. '

At last, I would say, if you want peace and serenity go to Shani Gao, but if you want to experience life in all its tainted glory, welcome to Delhi.



Photo by Yuvika

WHERE IS MY DELHI?

By Shreya Mishra

"Kitni hi khwaaisho ka kabristaan hai dilli
Taajub hai fir bhi jaan hai dilli"

~ Anonymous (Like one's existence in the city)

Amidst the crowdy lanes of Chandani Chowk with its ever glowing vibrancy or is it in between those luxurious skyscrapers heading to IGI?

Is it where women and men bargain in Sadar Bazaar to save a penny if not two or is it where regular visits to Khan Market becomes the protector of one's social status?

Is it where the Mohalla clinics are open for all or is it where the prerequisite for the services of hospital cum hotel is affiliation to an elite class?

Is it where Rashtrapati Bhawan witnessed India's first female Prime Minister sworn to her position or is it where 16 December 2012 became an unforgettable night for all?

Where is my Delhi?

Photo by Aviral Swankar

FASHION THROUGH A SOCIOLOGICAL LENS

By S. Ananya

Fashion is a part of our lives whether we realise it or not. It allows us to find ourselves in a world of ever-changing people, events, styles, values and using them symbolically to navigate through different social classes and groups. Fashion has an academic significance as it mirrors and influences the cultural, economic, and political circumstances of society. It also offers insight into social classes and societal progress. The manner through which people dress and the fashion choices they make provide insight into how social class and position are exhibited and performed, as well as how these dynamics change through time. This essay will examine the idea of fashion through a sociological lens, majorly from three significant sociological perspectives, attempting to assess the way each one views fashion.



Photo by Freshlookfashion

Looking at fashion through a sociological lens will allow us decipher how individual fashion preferences are connected to a larger social and historical context. As said by C.W. Mills, a celebrated sociologist, "Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both."

Fashion, in the view of functionalism, is used to distinguish between the wealthy and the less wealthy. Consequently, the wealthy would dress expensively because they can afford it, while the poor would dress cheaply because they cannot afford to dress in "high" fashion. It served a vital social role in that it allowed members of different social classes to differentiate themselves from one another, hence contributing towards preserving society's hierarchical stratification into classes.

Conflict theorists typically view fashion cycles as means by which industry owners make big profits. They believe that fashion keeps people diverted from a variety of other social, economic, and political difficulties that would otherwise compel them to voice discontent with the prevailing social order.

The conflict theory points out that it is the fashion businesses, not the consumers, that profit from it. Thus, the fashion business regularly introduces new trends in order to create a disparate demand and sell them for enormous profits.

One would most likely wear something formal, such as a collared shirt or perhaps a suit, to a job interview. A professional dress code would be followed since it is suitable for the occasion. This would demonstrate to the interviewer that you are a professional and are thus a good fit for the position you are seeking. Impression management refers to the desire to exhibit oneself in a specific manner. Symbolic interactionism examines how various aspects of social life, including fashion, convey meaning and thereby assist or impede communication (Davis, 1992). Goffman proposed the dramaturgical analysis of social interaction, in which he compares the world to a stage and people to performers. When seen in this light, fashion serves as a type of wordless language that allows us to tell people who we are and discover who they are. Our individual identities are constantly evolving.

We often experience anxiety or get insecure about our identity therefore we often convey our changing identities through our clothing. For instance, singer Billie Eilish makes use of her fashion sense as a tool to fight against the oppression she experiences as a woman. Billie receives criticism for her excessively androgynous and baggy clothing. She has emphasised that her appearance is a political statement in addition to being a fashion one.

People dress differently and trends change from one country to another in today's multicultural world. Individual identity and fashion are essentially interdependent since fashion shapes identity in a wide range of ways. From the colour we pick, to the shops we go to, our sense of style profoundly reflects who we are. The clothing people choose every day shapes how others view them, establishes what others may anticipate from them, and plays a major role in how first impressions are formed. All of these factors are also influenced by how those cultures interact with one another and by whether or not their societies are neo-colonial.

People express and inform their understanding of social trends and attitudes by purchasing and wearing stylish clothing, and by doing so, they also indicate that they are perceived and accepted. The idea of social roles, or who we are in relation to others, may be thought of in terms of what we wear. There is more to what we dress than just our individual preferences and styles. It reflects the broader social milieu in which we live, our social roles, and the institutions in which we take part. A significant instrument to negotiate and establish social relationships as well as to impose class disparities, one's sense of fashion has the ability to symbolise one's culture, appropriateness, moral standards, economic standing, and social influence..

George Simmel, a German sociologist and philosopher, proposes that fashion (the non-cumulative change in cultural features) is a social fact that arises from a fundamental tension unique to the social condition of the human being: on one hand, each of us has a likelihood to imitate others, and on the other hand, each of us also has a likelihood to set ourselves apart from others.

For Simmel, fashion represents nothing more than one of the many forms of life by the aid of which we seek to combine in uniform spheres of activity the tendency towards social equalization with the desire for individual differentiation and change. As far as sociological theories of fashion go, George Simmel's insight into fashion is perhaps the sole genuine attempt.

Delhites are renowned for their hospitality and ability to keep up with the latest trends while also creating their own. Delhi's fashion heritage is rich in tradition, vibrant in colours and prepossessing. Fashion is an extra way of life, a manifestation of inner beauty in which knowledge emerges, with a dash of luxury added to make it all worthwhile. It illustrates distinct eras' social history, human necessities, and general cultural splendor.

If we compare Delhi's street fashion to any other metropolitan city we can see its shades of uniqueness because of the many different colours that are splashed throughout the city and the wide variety of clothing that the people are

seen sporting, from simple ethnic and traditional clothing to western wear to everything in between.

The expansion of global trade prospects and the increasing popularity of cable television have helped Delhi residents adopt a new sense of style. As a result of the city's diverse population, which includes people from all walks of life, Delhi's traditional attire epitomises a sense of unity in diversity. When it comes to wedding attire, the Delhi crowd prefers designer sarees, suits, and lehengas with elaborate embroidery. There is a segment of the population that can afford the expensive attire, but there are others that purchase the less expensive version of Manish Malhotra lehengas or rent them just for the occasion in question. Footwear and makeup that match the dress are always chosen, as are matching accessories. Men, of course, do not trail behind when it comes to fashion. They dress them up with everything from tight fit trousers and denim to cargoes and t-shirts.



From Times of India

Without being able to see outside the parameters of an individual's life, it is difficult for society to recognize other reasons for an individual's fashion choice and therefore make a judgement.

Thus, understanding a person's background and how it relates to the larger socio historical context is important when deciding whether to wear a salwar kameez or a crop

top and jeans. We cannot truly follow fashion in the way that we would like to since there are numerous outside forces that prevent us from doing so. To conclude, I would like all of us to ponder over this question - Are our fashion choices something we make for ourselves, or are they influenced by other factors as well? The answer to this must be reconsidered and re-analysed.



Photo by Sarvi Pani

Amongst the bustling streets adorned with a kaleidoscope of painted autos in mesmerizing hues, they gracefully navigate through the labyrinthine traffic. Masters of their craft, adept and astute, these skilled drivers glide effortlessly along the city's arteries. In every pulse and rhythm of this vibrant metropolis, they find solace—a place where passion for driving intertwines with its heartbeat.

FORTY-FIVE MINUTES OF SOLITUDE: THE DMRC

By Agnes Riya Rodrick

The Delhi Metro started its vivacious and ever-expanding journey in the same year as I did, 2002. Through our ups and downs, we've somehow managed to make our way in this tough and fast-paced city while creating a lot of memories. It may sound personal, but the Delhi metro is truly a place accessible and meant for all. One can find people reading the most thought-provoking books; the occasional clueless man who accidentally gets on the ladies' coach; migrant workers in traditional attire; people with a medical report in their hand, looking for a place for their companion to sit; a middle-aged man watching Instagram reels with no earphones, inviting looks of disapproval, kids giving up the treasured seats to grab onto poles and spin around; the tenacious crowd of office commuters; and a foreigner reading a book one has never heard of, all moving to their destinations at the same pace, regardless of their differences.

The Delhi metro which was a result of the long-standing association with Japan has been connecting the city since December 24, 2002. Over the years, it has proven to be an aid in bridging distances between 255 stations covering around 350 km, acknowledging the presence of the NCR region, which even the people of Delhi sometimes struggle to do, all while being the most budget-friendly option for everyone. It also possesses a vibrant colour palette of 10 colour codes, as creative as the Starry Night. Be it locals cautiously planning their route to save time or the people planning to get off at the maze of Rajiv Chowk to grab a quick bite and ultimately stroll around in H&M, the metro treats everyone the same.

It is not uncommon to see people exhibiting their knowledge of the routes and colour codes of the Delhi metro as a badge of honour. One's knowledge about the metro is testimony to their well-



Photo by Khushie Singh

As paths intersect and intertwine, Delhi Metro extends its warm embrace.

travelled and experienced life in the capital city. Statements like “Pink line is slow”, “Blue line is always crowded”, and “INA is such a long walk” adds to the Delhi-centric conversation. But don’t get me wrong, even though the food is great, I have never been a fanatic of the city. However, my metro rides are something that I would not want to give up, even if I don’t find a place to sit. I wouldn’t give up my brief period of solace in the crowded metro for anything, I wouldn’t trade my 45 minutes of commute to and from college for a more comfortable ride, since that is one of the few moments I feel like the protagonist. Contrary to my

indecisive nature, in the metro, I know exactly where I need to get off, where it wouldn’t be so crowded, where my phone won’t fetch connection and the background music which was setting my mood for the day would stop, where I might just find a seat that I would eventually give up for someone who needs it more, which would be responded by a silent nod of thanks and where the escalator is, successfully avoiding the stairs. At this point, the iconic blue metro card and my muscle memory are enough to guide me home.

Time and again I take a step back

from the silver lining on the edge of the door wondering if I'm the reason the kind woman on the speaker is still asking us to stand away from the doors, only to realise it was a technical error and I would end up late for my class, not being able to use the classic "metro was late" excuse which, this time was genuinely true. I accept defeat and do what I know best, observe. I've hardly had any luck in the creative field but weaving stories out of the brief encounters with the people who accompany me on my journey everyday makes up a great hobby.

from the silver lining on the edge of the door wondering if I'm the reason the kind woman on the speaker is still asking us to stand away from the doors, only to realise it was a technical error and I would end up late for my class, not being able to use the classic "metro was late" excuse which, this time was genuinely true. I accept defeat and do what I know best, observe. I've hardly had any luck in the creative field but weaving stories out of the

fbrief encounters with the people who accompany me on my journey everyday makes up a great hobby.

The well-dressed woman wearing the traditional dark coloured bangles probably got married recently but couldn't get a good vacation owing to her job; the woman with dark circles and coffee who probably has a side hustle alongside her corporate job; the studious looking boy mugging up all too much information at once who probably, actually most definitely, pulled an all-nighter; the tote bag girl reading dark academia, whose Pinterest might have alot in common with mine; the joint family getting off at Dilli Haat to explore the metropolitan city and the school kids still carrying their question paper, their expressions are evident enough of how the exam went. Strange for a 21-year-old to say, but life really feels like a full circle when I see a version of my past and someone I might become, all in the same coach of the metro.

DELHI AS A CULTURAL CENTRE

By Sumedha Vashista

A sweeping generalisation often found in discourses around the national capital is that 'Delhi has no culture of its own'. While some may accept this truism at face value, we must probe deeper into the veracity of this statement.

The city of Delhi has a certain *je ne sais quoi*. Being a cosmopolitan centre, it is an amalgamation of cultures and ethnicities from across the country, and even the globe. But, as the functionalist maxim goes, 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. Similarly, there is something entirely unique to Delhi's cultural existence, that renders it more than a simple conglomeration of other cultures. There is not just a mere coexistence of various forms of popular and elite culture, often marked by stark visual differences in class and spatiality, but interaction and, most importantly, interdependence between these sections.



Photo by Gettyimages

Delhi boasts a layered history, observable through the various architectural heritage sites dotted among the urban sprawl. Historians (and the Delhi Tourism website) speak of the 'Seven Cities of Delhi', ranging from Siri to Shahjahanabad, as each dynasty from the era of the Delhi Sultanate onwards has sought to consolidate its hold here.

Delhi has been the seat of every central political authority in India since the end of twelfth century, and the vitality of this enduring

legacy can still be palpably experienced in the power flowing through modern day New Delhi and its novel political spectacles such as the National War Memorial, Central Vista, and the newly unveiled Parliament building.

Delhi has been the seat of every central political authority in India since the end of twelfth century, and the vitality of this enduring legacy can still be palpably experienced in the power flowing through modern day New Delhi and its novel political spectacles such as the National War Memorial, Central Vista, and the newly unveiled Parliament building.

Situated on the banks of Yamuna, Majnu-ka-Tila, or New Arjuna Nagar as it is officially known, was built on a piece of land granted to Tibetan asylum seekers fleeing Chinese occupation, in 1960. Simultaneously preserving and commodifying their culture, it has become an exotified pocket of 'Little Tibet', boasting unique foods like laphing, quirky cafes and eclectic knick-knacks. It is a popular Delhi University student hangout spot and tourist attraction.

The many cultures that are subsumed within Delhi lend their own flavour to the city while assimilating into it. This can be best evidenced in the singular culinary creation (or bastardization) that is tandoori momos. There is a veritable cornucopia of street food available: parathe, chaat, chole bhature, kulfis and faludas.

There are many ethnic enclaves and associations within Delhi, such as the Tamil Sangam and Kali Bari association. These manifest in spatiality in the form of sites such as the Malai Mandir and Bengali Market. Places of worship of all major world religions can be found in Delhi: Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Jama Masjid, Lotus Temple, Akshardham, and Judah Hyam Synagogue.

Architectural influences range from the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal periods, experienced in the bustling lanes of Chandni Chowk and Nizamuddin, to the British Raj, observed in the stately construction of Lutyens' Delhi. Modern buildings often juxtapose these relics.

M E R A K I

Hauz Khas is the site of a historic islamic fort complex, while simultaneously hosting the Hauz Khas Village, home to trendy cafes and bars. Delhi is a veritable city of juxtapositions, with fine dining and street food, wholesale markets and luxury designer retail outlets, high brow theatre attractions at Mandi House and mass appeal bollywood blockbusters in cinema halls.

There exists an administrative, class and cultural divide between North Delhi, South Delhi, East Delhi and West Delhi, all connected by the ubiquitous public transport lifeline of the city, the Delhi Metro. Delhi is an ever-expanding city, and the satellite cities of the National Capital Region (NCR) almost form one contiguous city with it, but not quite. The NCR cities of Gurgaon, Noida, Ghaziabad and Faridabad each have their own flavours, affiliations, associated stereotypes and unique relationship with Delhi. While this ever-expanding nature of the city speaks to its prosperity and increasing economic opportunities, the burgeoning population also places a strain on

the city's civic amenities, leading to traffic snarls, water shortages, power outages and a shortfall of public infrastructure.

Delhi is a city of students, bureaucrats, politicians, migrants. It is a city that welcomes all, and with a little dramatic licence, one can claim it is indeed "Dilwalon ki Dilli", the city of the large-hearted, and conversely, the city with a large heart: a unique microcosm of paradoxes, of cultures traditional and cosmopolitan.



By Khushie Singh



Photo by Reshma J

"Perceptions are what we choose to see"

Yamuna Ghat, living through its ancient traditions is polished with its refreshing surrounding but what lies beneath the river, is an eternal beauty tarnished with wastage and pollution. But why we chose to see only it's beautiful seagulls, mesmerizing sun rise and ignore the struggle faced by the scared river to sustain the last drop of water? This picture reminds me that apart from its aesthetics, their lies a world we chose to ignore.

GENDER, CRIME, AND SAFETY: NAVIGATING THE LANDSCAPE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

By Mehak Bansal

Gender, crime, and safety are interconnected issues that have been of concern in Delhi for several years. Delhi is the capital city of India and is known for its vibrant culture, history, and modernity, but it has also earned the notorious status of being one of the most unsafe cities for women due to high rates of incidents of gender-based crimes.

Gender-based crimes in Delhi are rampant and often go unreported due to social stigma, a lack of awareness, and a lack of trust in the law enforcement system. Crimes against women in the capital include rape, sexual harassment, domestic violence, acid attacks, and honour killings. These crimes have serious implications for the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of women and often result in long-term trauma and social isolation.

One of the major reasons for the high numbers of gender-based crimes in Delhi is the patriarchal mindset that dominates Indian society. This mindset leads to the objectification of women and the belief that women are inferior to men, which in turn leads to women being viewed and treated as vulnerable and easy targets for sexual assault and other forms of violence.



Photo by Stock Images

Another reason for the high incidence of gender-based crimes in Delhi is the lack of proper implementation of laws and policies that are aimed at preventing such crimes. Despite the existence of laws in the Indian Penal Code and provisions like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, the rate of conviction for such crimes is very low.

These low rates can be the outcome of several factors, including a lack of adequate training and resources for law enforcement officials, the reluctance of victims to report crimes due to fear of retaliation, or a lack of faith in the justice system.

The lack of safety in Delhi is not only a concern for women but also for other marginalised groups such as the LGBTQ+ community, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities, with the members of these communities often facing discrimination, harassment, and violence due to their identity.

However, steps are being taken to improve the safety and security of women and other marginalised groups in Delhi.

The Delhi Police has launched several initiatives aimed at addressing the issue of gender-based crimes, including the introduction of women-only police stations and the deployment of more women police officers.

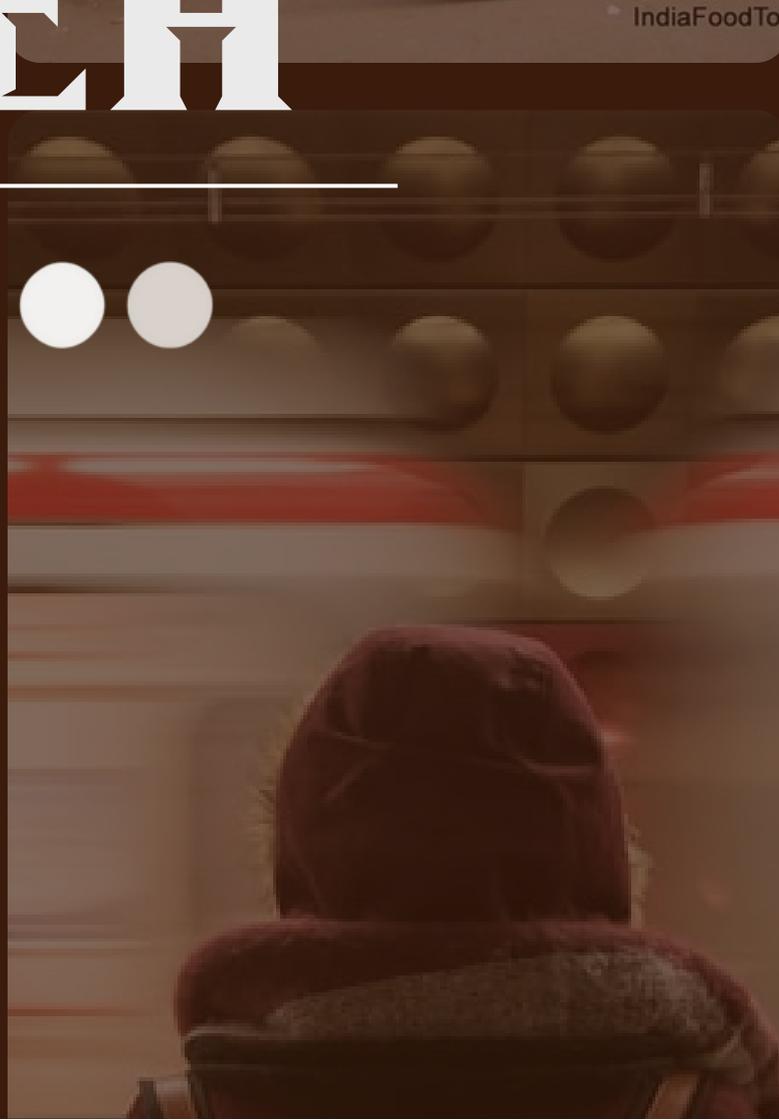
Additionally, civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been actively working towards creating awareness about the issue and providing support to victims of gender-based violence.

In conclusion, gender, crime, and safety are complex issues that require a multi-faceted approach to be addressed. While efforts are being made to improve the situation in Delhi, more needs to be done to create a safe and inclusive environment for all members of society such as changing the patriarchal mindset that perpetuates gender-based violence, improving the implementation of laws and policies, and providing support and resources to victims of such crimes.

Only then can we hope to create a truly safe and equal society for all.

MERAKI

DELHI AS AN IDEA



IndiaFoodTo

DELHI AS AN IDEA

"Delhi is more than just a city; it is an idea – an idea that has been shaped by its history, its geography, its people, its languages, its religions, its cuisines, its arts, its politics, its architecture, its literature and its poetry." – Sunil Khilnani, author and academic.

This section of Meraki deals with the subjectivities that mark people's perception of the city which is seen to be highly variable and dynamic when seen in the context of the diversity that the city encapsulates with it being home to a variety of identities belonging to all ends of the spectrum be it in terms of ethnicities, religion, gender, age, language, class, subcultures, ideological orientations, to name a few.

Taking us through deeply subjective perceptions and personal narratives surrounding the city through interviews, poetry and diary entries, the section brings to light how matters of identity play a crucial role in shaping people's experiences, narratives and perceptions with the city being seen differently by different people.

Delhi as an idea therefore emphasises upon the dynamism and subjectivity that marks the fluid nature of the city's image.

THE PLASTICITY OF THE DELHI EXPERIENCE: LOOKING AT THE CITY FROM THE INSIDE OUT AND THE OUTSIDE IN

By Aanya Sharma

Of the many words that come to mind while describing Delhi, the diversity and metropolitan experience that it offers are perhaps the first that one thinks of. Being the national capital of a country like India which boasts of diversity in every strand of its social fabric be it in terms of language, ethnicity, religion, etc, Delhi can be seen to condense such a heterogeneous experience within one metropolis.

From New to Purani Dilli, places like the Embassy area housing representatives from different countries of the world, to a place like Dilli Hatt that presents a unique experience of the cuisine and handloom of every Indian state to places like Sarojini Nagar, the bargaining culture of which is something unique to the city, the Delhi experience is truly something unparalleled.

In such a scenario, it is hard to think of any one way of defining the city, even for the people who come under the umbrella of being “Delhiites” but lack any common identity except for the fact that they have come to call Delhi their home.

In this regard, the way Delhi is experienced can be seen to be different for every individual, starting from the very way in which they conceptualise the idea of Delhi to the way they perceive its vices and virtues.

The multifaceted nature of the Delhi experience, therefore, is explored further through an interview conducted among three college students who differ in terms of their identity of being Delhi residents with the first respondent (R1) being a native Delhi resident born and brought up in the city, the second respondent (R2) being born and brought up in Delhi but has shifted to a new city and the third respondent (R3) being new to the city having recently moved for her higher education.

We would, therefore, be drawing a parallel between the divergent experiences of the respondents in terms of their conceptualisation of Delhi.

Question 1: What are the things that make Delhi “Delhi ” so to say for you?

R1: Oh well Delhi is all about its people, the way everyone lives their lives the way that they want, harbouring less inhibitions, having an open mindset and at least being aware of new ideas, cultures, etc but not necessarily accepting of it. The city life is hectic but not exhausting like you always have something to do, a place to go to. Delhi in itself can be seen in what people wear, the way they speak, the places they go to and the whole way of life here.



By Khyati Dubey

New Delhi: A bustling metropolis defined by its vibrant energy.

R2: Delhi is its extreme weather conditions, the people and their attitudes being slightly more straightforward and not always polite. It's also about heritage sites like Qutub Minar, the Red Fort, forest covers like the Jahapanah forest, and the Jamali Kamali park. It's about experiencing the cold January weather and the extreme heat of June and July, going to places like the Dilli Hatt and seeing handicrafts. There are so many things to amuse yourself with like going to rustic cafes, malls, picnics, night parties, etc.

Definitely, the cultural diversity too, most of the people are not true natives but have migrated here over generations and may be related to that is the different types of cuisines which are available here, be it Tibetan, Mughlai, etc so the people don't just stick to one type of food. Here in Bangalore, such options are not available with people mostly sticking to their cuisine with limited options available.

R3: Well, everyone knows what Delhi is, it is a place for everyone. It does have its regional divides, a lot of migrant diversity and people from different backgrounds, and good food but though Assamese food is available it is different, being way heavier on masala and the North Indian food being more prevalent.

It is also a place you can never get bored with, there is always something to do, something to discover, almost "too" much to do at times.

Every single place in Delhi is different like that. The number of malls, and heritage sites that you find here cannot be found anywhere else, there really are a lot of options. People come here for work, leisure, study, wedding shopping, etc. It caters to every need and occasion.

Back home in Guwahati, you did find people from different cultures like Punjabis and Marwaris but not in the way it is found in Delhi, the diversity here is much greater, we find people here from all parts of the country and every festival is celebrated here on a big scale be it Onam, Bihu, etc which is not seen in other parts of the country



Photo by Khyati Dubey

The Connaught Place, New Delhi

Question 2: What makes up the stereotypical image of a Delhiite?

R1: Your typical Delhiites are very true to yourself, quite unapologetic, are opinionated but they are also expressive and open to unconventional opinions and conversations.

R2: They're slightly on the ruder end, aggressive, straightforward and also progressive. People in Bangalore I have observed are more spiritual like the kids in Delhi do not really visit temples by themselves but here they do and even conduct pujas and carry out rituals. But they're not as assertive or upfront as Delhi people and more conservative about say women, LGBTQ+ and mental health issues.

R3: Before I came to Delhi, I did not carry any stereotypes or anything since I had visited the city before but yeah, I have heard and often seen that the people are very straightforward, not rude exactly, they're also culturally inclined and feel quite strongly about their food, traditions and everything.

Question 3: Do you consider yourself a Delhiite?

R1: Oh yes! Definitely. I've been born and brought up in Delhi and so have my parents, the stereotype of Delhiites that I mentioned before also holds true for me to some extent because of that.

R2: Yes and no. I have lived in Delhi but at the same time I have, at times, felt that I do not really belong because I am also Bengali and have had a traditional Bengali upbringing so the whole idea of vibing to Punjabi songs, going clubbing on the weekends, driving at the age of 15, etc hasn't really been my experience as has been the case for most Delhi kids.

But in Bangalore, I feel more connected to my Delhi identity and I try to appreciate it as well in the way it has shaped me, and made me strong, assertive, and adaptable to various situations and even climatic conditions.

R3: I mean I am not a proper Delhiite; I haven't been brought up in the city, but for an outsider, I may be considered as one even though I am new to the city like I would be in a position to comment on and give recommendations about places to visit, things to do, etc. in the city to someone who hasn't been here before.

Question 4: What do you think sets Delhi apart from other places?

R1: From my experience India can be seen as a very traditional and conservative society but in Delhi, you do see people breaking away from those traditions in a big way like there is an atmosphere of questioning seen, there is a space to do what you want to do and to not blindly follow what people tell you to. Everyone's individuality here is reflected in terms of how they dress be it ethnic, western or fusion, there is no set way of being and maybe this is what makes Delhi unique.

And also, the street food here is to die for, we all know about the famous Delhi momos

R2: Most places have their own culture but Delhi instead is made up of accepting people from all those different kinds of cultures, it is progressive

that way. For me, as a Bengali, though I did at times feel alienated from my Bengali identity like not being very familiar with Bengali films, books or knowing how to write in Bengali but here I did find a lot of people from my community and also people of different cultural backgrounds which provided me with a sense of belonging.

Delhi also taught me things I do not think I could've learnt in West Bengal. It made me more progressive, and accepting of different cultures, and provided me with flexibility in career options, my thought patterns and even the way I speak are developed here in a way that wouldn't have been possible anywhere else.

R3: Delhi has everything and I really mean everything. Even in the context of people, it has a considerable presence of people from North India, South India, the North-East, you name it, which is not seen in other places like in Assam mostly Assamese people are found and everyone mostly knows everyone back home but the same isn't the case here, Delhi is bigger and more diverse but divides like class divide are also seen here as well as in Guwahati.



Photo by Khushie Singh

What is Delhi without Chhole Bhature?

Question 5: What is a side of Delhi that you feel remains unseen or unaddressed?

R1: With how Delhi is, I think most things are talked about be it class, caste or gender issues. Delhi owns up to what it is, but maybe that's just my perspective as a college student in Delhi.

R2: Being the national capital, every aspect of Delhi is talked about but my perception is based upon my experiences as a having lived in South Delhi, a more developed area, but in Delhi, you do see other parts as well like Old Delhi, even villages, that you visit and forget that it is still Delhi that you are in.

R3: The fact that there is a lot of poverty in Delhi is something which is not publicised a lot so it was not something that I was aware of back home and saw for myself here only. Also, the idea that I had that being the capital city the law implementation, facilities etc would be stronger and better also changed.

Inequalities exist here as well.

Question 6: How do you think Delhi treats women and minorities?

R1: Oh my god! It's really not a safe place for women. People do talk about the difficulties that women face but not much is done about it. Growing up in Delhi as women we've all been taught and have heard of things like "Avoid deserted alleys", "Don't be out too late" and small stuff like this which become a part of your daily life. Even if I want to get ice cream and it's 10 pm, it's not even my parents, I myself, would hesitate to go out.

For minorities, I feel Delhi is very used to having people from the outside so there is more acceptance or indifference here maybe but stereotypes against communities are undoubtedly present. Everyone has opinions about everyone, it is not one-sided. But the treatment of minorities I feel is not that good like in front of the majority, the minorities do have a harder time expressing their identity and interests.



Photo by Saanvi Pani

Masjid-i-Jehan-Numa (Jama Masjid of Delhi) built by Shah Jahan

R2: Oh my god! The treatment of women is abysmal. Misogyny exists even amongst the most educated, take the Boys Locker room case that took place in South Delhi. The whole idea of women should not go out at night after 8 pm is way too real and there are way too many cases of sexual harassment against women. As someone who has personally faced harassment in broad daylight, it really is not a safe place for women.

In Bangalore, the situation is much better. Women in the main city do feel safe to travel alone, take a cab at 10 pm or travel in buses with the front section of buses reserved for women, which is not seen as prominently in Delhi, especially after the Nirbhaya case I feel. Like in Delhi if a person approaches me, the first thing that comes to my mind is how I can protect myself but here nine out of ten times it is people being helpful or friendly which has taken some getting used to.

For the minorities, you do see the dominant population being North Indian and so you do see judgment from that side like people making fun of those from other cultures but on the whole, they are open or at least used to people having different identities like Bangalore is a little harsh towards outsiders with the major difficulty coming from the language barrier, most people speak only Kannada so it is difficult to communicate with the locals. Also, stereotypes about North Indians do exist here and they are not as welcoming towards them like here I am treated more like a North Indian than a Bengali because of my Delhi upbringing so yeah, the stereotypes have been personally experienced by me.

R3: For women, Delhi is liberal till it isn't like there are opportunities but it is also true that Delhi is not a safe place for women but it's probably my experience as an outstation student that adds to that as well, like my parents are farther away so it is a little more difficult to feel safe here.

In terms of minorities, I personally have felt Delhi to be very welcoming to me. Everything sort of fell into place here but yeah adjustments had to be made in terms of food, culture, etc. Also, North-Easterners in Delhi do face problems generally like racism and encountering many stereotypes. Even I faced problems like this like I wasn't used to speaking Hindi all the time but I had to adjust. In Guwahati, people are welcoming too but stereotypes exist there as well about North Indians, South Indians, etc though I feel Delhi does see more cases of mistreatment.

Question 7: What is something that you admire and dislike about the city?

R1: The hustle-bustle. There is always something happening in Delhi and something to do but also related to that is the fact that I do want more quiet places in the city.

R2: I like the fact that you never get bored in Delhi. There is always something to do, a café to visit, places to shop, be it high-end brands or street shopping and also the fact that most of my friends are here or even in Bangalore they happen to be Delhiites.

What I don't like is the fact that I do not feel safe in Delhi.

R3: The food, the diversity, the fact that there is so much variety in terms of shopping brands and places to visit like the Dilli Hatt which is something you would not find back home. The infrastructure and the opportunities that it offers are also something that cannot be matched.

Probably the only thing I dislike about the city is that it is not home to me yet, the food, my family, etc is something that I miss a lot. Also, the fact that the city is not that safe for women, instances of racism and lack of acceptance for outsiders can make the city a little less desirable.

Question 8: How has the city shaped or influenced who you are today?

R1: I have lived in Delhi all my life so its influenced all aspects of my life, the way I dress is because of it, the way I question the way I dress is because of it and even the way I carry myself is because of Delhi. The no-nonsense attitude that I carry with me, being open to accepting or at least being tolerant of different opinions is because of my upbringing here.

R2: It has shaped me in every way, in the books I read, the movies I watch, the things I believe in, my atheistic and leftist inclination which I felt more supported for in Delhi. Even the subject of my higher education was possible because of it, it gave me the option to study economics with science but here in Bangalore if you take up the sciences you mostly end up as an engineer, scientist or doctor. It has led to a more holistic well-rounded development for me.

R3: Delhi broadened my perspective and it taught me to be independent. I got to know much more about other cultures coming here than I did before. I am more aware now of how people from different cultural backgrounds live together and their specific ways of life.



Photo by Anoushka Sharma

Lodhi Garden: An echo of the national capital's illustrious tryst with History

Question 9: Lastly, how would you describe Delhi to an outsider?

R1: Well... it's a very happening place where there is a place for everyone so you will end up finding something you love and also hate no matter what. There is no one Delhi it's more like a "halwa" of all cultures so in a way that can be taken as a culture in itself but it's so diverse that it's hard to lay down any definite characteristics for it. And yeah, the momos are to die for.

R2: I would say try out the food here, it has a palette that no other place can offer and the same is the case with the heritage sites, the museums, clubs, cafes and everything.

R3: It's a culturally rich place but needs to be accepted with an open heart. It does have its fair share of problems like pollution, and water issues but your whole experience depends on the way you open your arms to the city. For Delhi to accept you, you need to accept it too.

The three respondents shared similar identities in terms of their age, gender, socio-economic and educational background with the point of divergence focused upon and explored in the interview being the difference in their place of upbringing and current residence.

From the responses gathered a distinct image of Delhi could be seen to come through.

Within the presence of such diversity, Delhi culture was also held to be marked by an assertion of individuality by its people be it through their dress, their speech, etc. corresponding to the idea of multiple identities being held by the people in addition to their identity as Delhiites according to the respondents.

In terms of the perks of Delhi life, the opportunities that it offers in terms of education, career growth and infrastructural support were held to be unrivalled by all the respondents.

However, what was also acknowledged was the idea of class divides present in the city reflected further in the city's spatial arrangement with a cultural

divide seen between the south, north, east and west sides of Delhi, the presence of slum areas, uber-rich and posh areas, all highlighting different facets of the urban life.

An area where the respondents diverged in their opinions was, on the one hand, while the two respondents raised in Delhi focused more on the progressive nature of the city, the outstation respondent did highlight how ideas of conservatism were also found and the demographic dominance of the North Indian people with an example given of how though a wide variety of cuisines are present, they are seen as primarily catering to north Indian tastes.

Moreover, Delhi as an urban socialising agent was seen to provide a learning experience in being independent, adjustable, able to coexist and respect different cultural identities and thus harbouring a cosmopolitan attitude as well as developing the skills to deal with different kinds of situations on your own among many others.

A prominent issue that the respondents almost automatically agreed upon was in the context of the treatment of women in the city. Lack of safety for women, misogynistic mentality and cases of sexual harassment were cited by all the respondents, though the third respondent did highlight how it could also be seen as a liberal place for women, offering opportunities in terms of career and self-expression that may not be present in other parts of the country.

In essence, the different perspectives of the respondents brought to life an image of the city as dynamic and ever-evolving with differences seen in the conceptualisation of the merits and demerits of the city by different individuals linked to their varied identities, personal experiences and stereotypical assumptions.

The city, therefore, though geographically limited, in a cultural sense was taken to be ever expanding taking in elements from different cultures and giving it its own Delhi taste be it in terms of people, cuisines, infrastructure and so on.

MY DELHI

By Saanya Sodhi

Amid a sleepless night, one contemplates life in a city marred by capitalism's sorrows. The air purifier's hum symbolizes pollution, while the poem navigates their conflicted love for Delhi. Navigating the city by metro, the vivid journey evokes both despair and resilience, culminating in hope of Delhi's potential for transformation.

It is now three in the morning
And here, I lie in contemplation again of
what should be my plan of action for
tomorrow
Because sleep is a mercy that comes hard
now that I'm engulfed in the sorrows of
capitalism.

It's all silent around me; all I can hear is the
air purifier,
It reminds me every minute that I live in
nothing less than a gas chamber; That my
parents sleep in a room with plants for an
air purifier and that I should be guilty of
breathing breathable air.

Every second a mosquito whispers it's song
in my ear,

And since the advent of October, Delhi has
made even me merciless, killing these
mosquitoes to stop the subtle song while I
myself beg for the mercy of sleep to make
me forget.



Photo by Yuvika

When I'm asked why I love my Delhi so much?
I usually have no rock to offer them;
Is it the bad roads, the slum or the spit;
The unbreathable air or the ever growing
garbage pit?

I often forget the beauty of India Gate;
losing my monument of choice to stinky ponds
and packet covered lakes that has now given
itself to become a spectacle of propaganda.

I forget the cultural heritage of Agrasen ki Baoli
to drunkards around it; after all I am a cis
woman and my Delhi kind of hates me for it.

I lose the Red Fort to the crowd that surrounds
it and to the echoes of speeches of fake
promises of unity as though the Red Fort stands
tall in the ocean of fire that has become of my
Delhi.

I want to go to Humayun's tomb again, for its
beauty and history, but the traffic's too bad
these days and I don't have enough days in my
life.

I want to drink soju at majnu ka tila, I want to
have mutton cutlet on the periphery of dilli;
Want to go to Bangla Sahib and want to eat
golgappe forms the shop perpendicular to
Bangla;

I want to see how the mughal sultanate ruled, I
want to see all the masjids, mandirs, maqbarey
and hoor

M E R A K I

But how must I take a second to see if my Delhi will
not stop a second for me.

I live in Delhi,

Her air is not air and her streets are not mine but I
am still torn for falling in love with her.

I'm born from her land, Delhi is my mother;

How must I come to hate her?

How must I believe she is not mine?

How must I believe that she was never mine?

How must I believe that she is beyond the state of
coming back to me?

The day before yesterday, I was travelling by the
metro,

Despite the greatness of her children I found a
seat,

I sat from Mayur Vihar to Majlis Park seeing the
entire route in pink;

Every part of which recited a different story;

Durgabai Deshmukh has its own story to tell; south
campus spiking up an anxious stomach ache with
life after college zooming at me faster than the
metro I'm sitting in.

Sir Vishweshwaraih, reminded me of the great
scholars that my Delhi has birthed, hoping that
would mean that my birth would amount to
something too.

I then roamed at Majlis park, took yellow line to
Jahangirpuri,

Saw the layers of garbage, the pain in innocent
eyes, My Delhi has stripped them of hope with no
fault or their own.



Then from Yellow I travelled to Delhi Haat,
The place that I place on her head as a crown;
I bought earrings, rings and scarfs and ate the
Kashmiri cuisine right in the lap of my Delhi;
The Yakhni curry, the Dum Pulao, the Rogan Josh
and the Rushtaba- e- Khaas,
and the momos, the chilli sauce and the soup; that
came not from China or Japan but came
from my mothers sister- Sikkim and Shillong.

Then from there I took Pink back, Pink to Rajouri
then blue on the map;
I thought of stopping at Rajouri continuing my
adventures tomorrow but with the air I had
breathed I wasn't sure I'd have one;
Took blue to Dwarka to help my friend set up a
new place, then went from there to Noida just to
change to Magenta;
In Magenta I went to Janakpuri, where I had the
Havmor ice cream and then went back home.

Every bit of violet painted a different picture than
magenta, and every bit of green narrated a
different story than the line that drops you to the
airport.

I let out a sigh of relief remembering the traffic and
rehabilitation troubles the building of pink brought
upon us while I quietly eavesdrop on the stories of
her journey on my journey in the colours.

My Delhi may be messed up and may be messing
with us all, but she can grow just like she's grown
us.

A WALK

By Sylvia Maria Dominic

The poem "A Walk" aims to shed light upon the everyday experience of being and living as a woman in the city of Delhi, drawing a picture of the deplorable state of women's safety within the city that is deemed to be one of the most unsafe places in the country for women.

A quiet walk
Needs a great deal of preparation

Even amidst the crowd
I know I am alone
There's no Messiah
Walking down the streets
To protect me.

I walk through the city,
Each day, prepared.
To get looked at,
Harassed,
Or even assaulted.

I am a woman
And it takes great courage
To leave home.

Photo by Khushie Singh

WONDER HOW SHE SMILED?

By Akshina Ghosh

She stood up with a squall in her heart
A silent scream that surged, enough to
rip her apart,
Dwindled in one corner of her eyes;
Standing dazed before a framed smile,
in surprise
Power it held to assimilate her voiceless
grief away;
She said, "The morning has set in early
today,
I mustn't be late"
She smiled.

Door to door she went berserk,
Only to listen with heart fit to break;
Murmuring how she had tried, however
All that was too weak for her heart's
endeavor.
A voice within her whispered—"It will all
soon disappear forever,
To set free your struggling passion, so
dissever"
Deception too real to even walk a mile
Yet she smiled.

Photo by Khyati Dubey

Ravenous, she has been out all day,
Afflicted by the hustle, in dismay
Fortune hoarded has little left to wear
out,

Vindicating, "Ahh unreal phantoms of
distraught".

"Fate, only favored those who've
endured

All the pains" a common thing she said;
Hope must be retained
She smiled

Taking a sip from a cup she last kissed
Reminiscing of her presence- Oh what a
bliss!

The moon that they both loved, was too
fair to bewail tonight,
But, how big was a sin to come from
outside.

Unrestrained sobs and a constant sense
of pain,

Felicity again lost beyond the façade of
the sky- in vain.

Howbeit they said, "Not half of life have
you tasted in a while"

She smiled.

HOME

By Sylvia Maria Dominic

The poem "Home" intends to highlight the psychosocial issues that arise from the ways in which cases of domestic abuse are dealt with by a person's intimate circle, locating such a situation within the city of Delhi which according to the 2021 report published by the National Crime Records Bureau was seen to be the most unsafe metropolitan city for women across India.

Mother taught me,
 "No home's safe,
 Except yours.
 Trust no one,
 Except for family"

But, is my home really safe?
 Is it really mine?

His steps, his voice
 Echoes in my head.
 His touch,
 His breath still lingers on my body.

He was no stranger.
 He stayed among us.
 He was family!
 Again I ask,
 "Is my home really safe?
 Is it really mine?"

The reality remains
 Fresh in my mind.

I'm disgusted by
 Every inch of myself.
 Every inch of myself
 I wish I could skin,
 Purify my blood
 With fire as I stay still.



A DIARY ENTRY

By Lavanya Chaturvedi

Delhi I will remember you.

In two months, my journey will end but the lessons you gave me will stay forever. Initially I was intimidated as you were just like another stranger to me... Understanding you has been one of the toughest and yet the most beautiful experience till now...

And now as I reflect back,

The past 1 year seems like a dream.

You were like a warm hug to me, the markets my stress buster and the street food my saviour from home sickness.

I wish real life human relationships could have as strong connectivity as the Delhi metro has,

how beautifully all the lines complement each other, making the journey for a wanderer who is trying to find the way through life much easier.

You were like a parent to me who introduced me to the true struggles of the world of grownups.

When reality hits hard, things used to get difficult but then you never missed to pamper me with my favourite momos and chat stalls.

I never knew that having good bargaining skills can be a flex, and travelling alone was such a privilege.

Thank you, Delhi for treating me well, the child who came here is now an independent adult,

With a heavy heart as I write the final parting message, I can proudly say that I will leave Delhi but the Delhi in me will stay forever.

MERAKI



DELHI AS A SITE OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATIONS AND CONTESTATIONS





DELHI AS A SITE OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATIONS AND CONTESTATIONS



"Delhi is a microcosm of India. It has been the capital of several dynasties and cultures, each leaving its mark on its landscape and psyche. It has absorbed influences from different regions and religions, creating a mosaic of identities and expressions." – Narayani Gupta, author and academic

Delhi being the capital city of the most populous and one of the most diverse countries in the world has been a site for political contestation for centuries having witnessed the rise and fall of many regimes throughout its history with each leaving its distinctive mark on the city's culture, architecture and identity.

It thus has concurrently been a focal point of social movements, protests and revolutions that have sought to challenge the status quo, express citizens' dissatisfaction and demands to initiate change as well as served as a site for identity assertion and expression.

The concentration of the major administrative structures in the city coupled with enormous cultural diversity has often seen a high degree of political consciousness in the city which is seen to manifest in different ways.

This section of Meraki, therefore, intends to bring forth the different ways in which dissent and resistance are expressed in the city such as through the medium of graffiti art as well as the complications that arise within the legal and political framework of the city such as that of the high rates of crime which the city witnesses and how it intersects with issues of gender and moral policing.

GRAFFITI AND RESISTANCE: THE POLITICS OF STREET ART IN DELHI

By Adya Manchanda

Street art has played a significant role in global history and its earliest evidence in India dates back to the Maharashtra caves of Ajanta, a site of Buddhist artwork that is regarded as a site of national historical importance. Street art has flourished in many locations in Delhi, such as the Lodi art district, Khan market, Tihar jail, and Govindpur metro station, all of which are considered to have a beautifying effect. However, the common practices of inscribing film dialogues, effusive declarations of love, and abuses directed towards the government are seen as vandalism. The question arises: if both are mediums of expression, what distinguishes creative graffiti from its defacing counterpart, which is policed through laws such as the *Delhi Prevention of Defacement of Property Act, 2007*?

This is a popular debate among policymakers, artists, and citizens

that centers around the question of what qualifies as artistic expression and who has the right to regulate it in public spaces. While some view such artworks as vandalism and urge the state to discourage and regulate it, others consider it a right of citizens to express themselves freely through this means, refuting the authority of the government in deciding what is and what isn't art. Additionally, the latter believes that graffiti and other forms of street art are strong and effective modes of resistance against oppressive systems, such as the 2016 graffiti murals in Delhi during the #NotInMyName campaign, raising awareness about mob lynching and hate crimes, or the 2017 murals of the Khirki Extension in South Delhi, challenging stereotypes and promoting gender equality.

Furthermore, *The Indian Express* shed light on this aspect through

their observations about Shaheen Bagh, stating that *“At the site of the Shaheen Bagh sit-in on the Kalindi Kunj road to Noida, all signs of the over 100 days protest are gone. Shops on the road are buzzing once again, the tent sheltering the protesting women has disappeared along with most of the artwork and sculptures, including the 40-foot iron map of India. All that remains are some slogans graffitied on a nearby foot-overbridge — Inquilab zindabad, No CAA, No NRC.”*

Consequently, the actions of the Delhi government, which involved Delhi police painting over the protesting graffiti and dismantling art installations in Shaheen Bagh and Jamia, shows how this medium of expression is suppressed as a mode of socio-political expression under the guise of vandalism. Another illustration of the same is the controversy over the government removing street artist Banksy’s Paharganj mural in 2010, which depicted a monkey wearing a sandwich board with the words, *“Laugh now, but one day we will be in charge.”* During the same time, there was a massive government “beautification” drive,

which included sports-themed street art and artwork that hid Delhi’s slums for the 2010 Olympics in Delhi, similar to the construction of the Olympic boulevard by the Public Works Department (PWD) Delhi in 2021. Moreover, the question of street art and graffiti becomes more complex when we consider its current commercialization and commodification. In recent years, professional graffiti artworks have been popularly commissioned by families for their residences and by big brands like Nike and Adidas for their outlets. Many believe that such commissioned artwork in gallery expositions for curated audiences and online forums that share pictures and auction them have taken street art away from its natural urban landscape. Furthermore, they reduce the creativity, criticality, deliberateness, and boldness of the artist.

Additionally, as proposed by the Italian philosopher Sergio Benvenuto in his interpretation of Georg Simmel’s ‘Fashion,’ as this art form extends in the environment of the city, the encounters with such art pieces become increasingly probable, thus reducing the intensity of the

reaction it inspires, which, in turn, reduces its informative capacity and impact. This is a typical example of the German-American theorist Herbert Marcuse's explanation of the loss of the critical function and sublimating effect of art due to its capitalistic democratic access, which subsequently leads to its suffusion into everyday life.

The question of street art and graffiti in India remains complex, with various viewpoints regarding its artistic value and social impact. While some consider it to be vandalism and urge the government to regulate it, others view it as a right of citizens to express themselves freely and critically against socio-political oppression. The suppression of this medium of expression, as seen in the dismantling of art installations in Shaheen Bagh and Jamia, highlights the need for a nuanced conversation about the role of street art in society. As street art continues to evolve and gain commercial traction, it is imperative to consider its impact on the public's perception and understanding of art and its critical function in society.



Street Art in Lodhi Colony. Photo by Getty Images



Photo by Anoushka Sharma

Colonial architecture at the heart of New Delhi-
'The Collonade', Connaught Place, New Delhi

PUBLIC SPACES, OBSCENITY LAWS AND THE POLICING OF AFFECTION

By Anushmita Mitra

Delhi – the capital city of India, gives an insight into the rest of the country with its corners brimming with a multitude of cultures from across the land. Anyone who has spent enough time roaming around the galliyan of Delhi will have a love-hate relationship with the city; however, we all can agree that the city has too many charms to steal the spotlight, making it Dilli – Dil walon ki.

While going through the lanes of Delhi, one cannot miss the beautiful parks built at every corner of the city that is home to many beautiful gardens, and roads meeting green patches that dot its landscape. Now it is interesting to see how these beautiful gardens not only provide us with better air but a lot more than that.

Gardens have always been a place of socialization, breaking

down walls of any sort of discrimination – be it on the basis of gender or age. Furthermore, blooming gardens are symbolic of love and youth. Bollywood has been a witness to this. Be it Yash Chopra’s iconic movies or our favourite Gulabi Aankhein; love has always been professed in a beautiful meadow of flowers.

Bollywood love stories are synonymous with creating an epic love story that blooms under the shadows of beautiful flowers, which also marks the union of two people who would fight the world to be together. Whether it’s Amit and Chandni’s budding romance or Raj- Simran’s swoon-worthy reunion, these gardens and flowers have brought light and joy in the name of love that the world will never forget. And maybe for this reason, gardens are full of young romance. But is that all?

Of course not! The beautiful

parks of Delhi are an attraction for young couples for many reasons. Since India has the highest population in the world and Delhi being its capital, is overly crowded. Too many people are clumped together, privacy is only a concept. The physical expression of love is natural but it obviously cannot happen openly. It occurs in confined places. At such moments, our parks appear as a savior- sanctuaries for lovers to seek intimacy and some 'alone' time. There also exists a financial aspect to this. Most young couples aren't privileged enough to afford hotels on a regular basis. In subaltern places, finding

affordable housing is a pipe fantasy. As mentioned above pre-marital affairs are secretive and cannot be fostered in a home, which is why our parks have always been a space for couples to engage in public display of affection.

Now public display of affection can surely be annoying for some however it attracts far more moral policing than we can imagine. How ironic it is that two adults consensually kissing each other attracts more attention than a man publicly urinating? Furthermore, this policing has taken such a strong form that



Photo by Khyati Dubey

To be young, and in love in Delhi

political parties, nowadays, find it 'morally correct' to beat couples (especially on Valentine's) in the name of culture.

Moreover, certain levels of moral policing can also be an expression of homophobia. Homosexual couples, like heterosexual couples, would find their peace in public spaces. However, homosexuality is highly stigmatized and queer displays of affection would lead to horrifying acts of punishment from the state. Perhaps ours is a society that has normalized hate instead of love.

So the question is - is public display of affection a crime? Well, it obviously isn't, but according to the Indian Penal Code any level of 'obscenity' is a criminal offence. Section 294 of the Indian Constitution imposes up to three months of prison and a fine to those who commit any obscene act, in a public place, to the 'annoyance of others'. Now there isn't any proper definition given by the judiciary as to what is obscene and what level of it is considered a crime. So evidently, the ones in power use it at their convenience.

There have been reports of police trying to extort money from naive young adults. Such incidents are enough to give life-long trauma to those at the receiving end. Movies such as Masaan have portrayed this dark side well. And although Section 377 has decriminalized homosexuality, our statistics of crimes against homosexual couples say otherwise.

This brings us to the very reason why our obscenity laws need amendments. These laws might have had some good intentions but with time, laws need to change. Our societies are always evolving, and so are the meanings of ethics, morality and traditions. Instead of vague provisions, we need rather carefully worded orders wherein non-consensual and intentional vulgarity is punished. But before playing this blame game, let's look within ourselves because we are the ones who make up this society.

DELHI'S RISING CRIME TIDE

By Niyam Shyjo

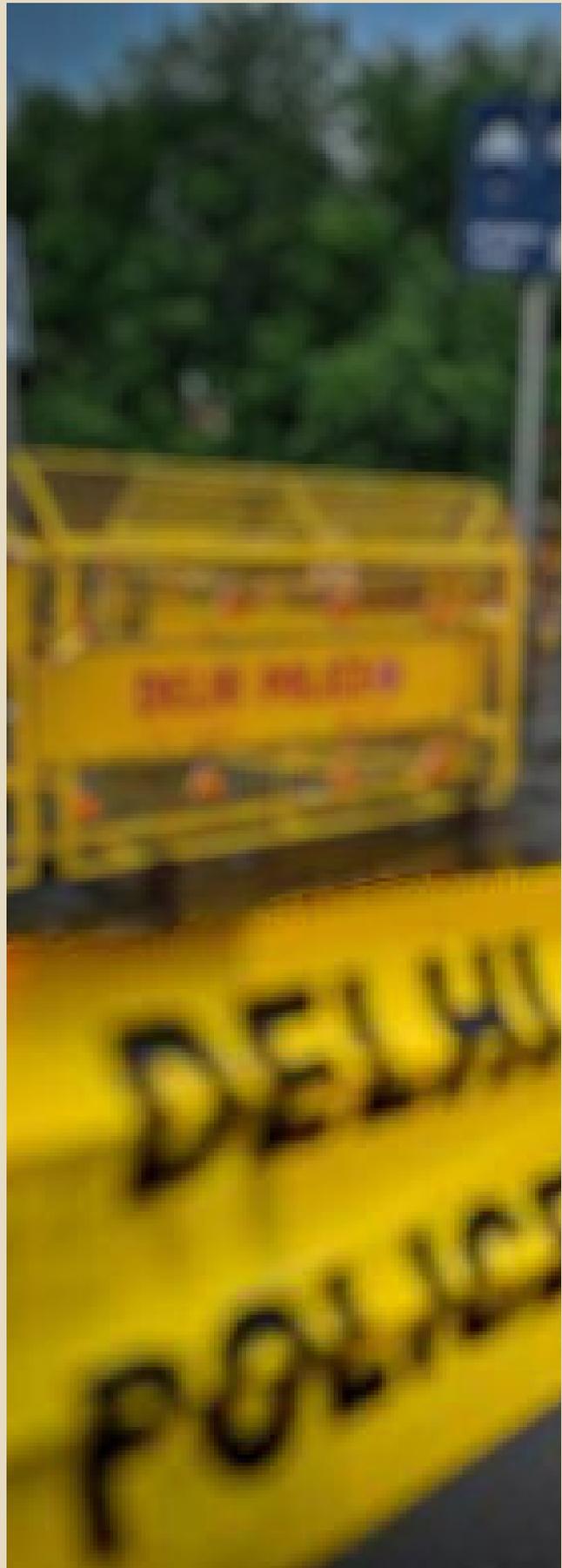
Delhi, the capital of India harbours the dreams of many. A state also proudly referred to as 'Dilli meri jaan'. A centre that amalgamates the culture of every other state of India. A state that is a symbol of history but also a symbol of progress. Behind the might and main stands the harsh reality that many are yet to accept. I am sure we have got an idea of what exactly I am referring to. Are we really surprised to hear that Delhi is not only a home for immigrants and dreams but also a home for heinous crimes? Why is the capital of India profoundly also known as the 'rape capital'? These two questions arise in our minds whenever we see the crime reports of Delhi.

We have reached a stage where the pages of history about the walls of monuments are being replaced by pages of articles about Delhi crimes. One of the most common and unavoidable crimes associated with Delhi is rape. A society that should be a safe space for women has become a horror home for them.

Oare we as a society lagging behind to provide a comfortable atmosphere for women? When a crime of this caliber happens it is very difficult for the community and even the world to cope with. One of the most high-profile cases was the 2012 gang rape and murder of a 23-year-old woman on a moving bus. The incident sparked massive protests across the country, calling for better laws to protect women and harsher punishment for perpetrators. While the incident brought attention to the issue of sexual violence in India, it also highlighted the culture of victim-blaming and patriarchal attitudes that often perpetuate such crimes. Victim blaming and patriarchal mindset are prevalent issues in Delhi that eternize crimes, particularly against women. In the aftermath of a crime, it is common for people to question the behaviour or dress of the victim, rather than holding the perpetrator accountable. This practice of victim blaming shifts the responsibility away from the accused and onto the victim,

ultimately perpetuating the cycle of violence. Moreover, the patriarchal mindset in Delhi reinforces the belief that men are superior to women, leading to the normalization of gender-based violence. Women are often viewed as objects or inferior beings, and this has led to a culture where harassment, assault, and other forms of violence against women are accepted and even condoned. Today no one is safe in Delhi. The list of crimes goes on and on. From robbery to murder—you name it and you will find it. We think at the pace at which we as a society are accepting modernisation, at the same rate, crimes may be going downhill. Unfortunately, it is not the case. The love for this state is incomprehensible that it is baffling to see the extent to which one may go to protect its glory. From blaming the government to blaming women, we are stuck in a vicious cycle of not accepting our own flaws and censuring anything and everything.

According to the latest Crime in India Data released by NCRB, Delhi has the highest number of crimes in the country, accounting



for 41% of the total crimes committed. In fact, Delhi alone accounts for two out of every five crimes committed in the country. When compared to other metro cities in India, Delhi is significantly ahead in terms of the number of crimes committed. The city has often been described as one of the most unsafe cities in India, with high levels of pollution, traffic congestion, and a lack of effective law enforcement adding to the problem. To address the rising tide of crime, the Delhi Police has introduced several measures such as a dedicated women's helpline and a mobile app for women's safety. However, there is still much work to be done to ensure that the city is safe for all its residents, particularly women and children.

In conclusion, Delhi's crime situation remains a major concern, and urgent action is needed to address the underlying issues that contribute to it. While measures such as stricter laws and better law enforcement are important, changing societal attitudes towards women and promoting gender equality are equally essential in ensuring the safety and security of all citizens. People must learn to hold

perpetrators accountable for their actions, rather than blaming the victim. Additionally, gender equality must be promoted at all levels, and patriarchal attitudes must be actively challenged and dismantled. By addressing the root causes of victim blaming and patriarchal thinking, we can work towards creating a safer and more equal society in Delhi, where everyone can live without fear of violence or discrimination.



Photo by Rebhekha Arun

Symmetry in Stone: Behold the Captivating Beauty of
Humayun Tomb

UNDERSTANDING “DELHI” WITH PROFESSOR SANJAY SRIVASTAVA



Professor Sanjay Srivastava is a prominent anthropologist and British Academy Global Professor. His research spans across themes in urbanism and urban landscapes, new middle-class trends, and gender dynamics. His works have explored technology's urban impact, the influence of global consumerist culture and the role of religion in urban landscapes. With significant publications and film collaborations, he contributes to both academia and policy-making. This interview was conducted by Hitika Kalra.

Interviewer: Good afternoon sir, it is such a pleasure speaking with you today! Your scholarly work on Delhi has been so inspirational and we can't wait to get your views on questions we have received for our magazine.

To start with, we wanted to ask how should we, as students, approach Delhi NCR as an object of study from a sociological perspective?

Prof Sanjay Srivastava: From a sociological viewpoint, the infrastructure of the city and how it is being used. How are public spaces occupied? We often see instances of couples occupying public spaces for private interactions. It is also important to look at the religious life of the city: what are the different ways in which religious beliefs and practices shape city living and how do religious hostilities influence it?

Interviewer: Yes sir. These approaches would be significant in the study of big cities and urban life, but is Delhi as a subject of sociological study, different from other major urban centers like Mumbai or Bangalore?

Prof Sanjay Srivastava: Yes, Delhi NCR presents a unique sociological landscape due to many reasons. First of all, being the national capital, there is a significant capital investment made by the government. Apart from this, the influx of migrants also shapes the unique social environment of Delhi. Unlike other states and major cities, Delhi attracts people from all over the country. While there are some localities that belong to specific regional groups, most of the population in Delhi is diverse and dispersed.

Interviewer: That's very insightful! The topic of the migrant population also brings us to our next question – What does it mean to belong to Delhi or claim it as one's own? From a sociological standpoint, what are the underlying factors that shape the sense of belonging and identity associated with being a "Delhite"?

Prof Sanjay Srivastava: Well, this identity of being a 'Delhite' has come to be associated with modernity. There is also a sense of superiority that is often attached to this identity and it's not new. Even before connectivity and media, stating in other parts of India that you belong to Delhi or even visited Delhi came with a level of prestige. People hold Delhi in high regard, partly due to its symbols. Delhi's monuments and symbols are often used to represent the nation as a whole. And when you meet people from other parts of India, who have never even been to Delhi and yet they already know the localities, markets, and symbols, it does give a sense of superiority.

Interviewer: Even as college students, we witness the sense of privilege that is associated with someone who belongs to Delhi. Why has this identity become so important?

Prof Sanjay Srivastava: I feel that may be because of the access and the resources that young people have in Delhi as compared to other parts of the country. Even the towns and cities their parents and grandparents belonged to, may not have had the wealth of resources that Delhi provides. Hence, the identity of being a 'Delhite' becomes important.

Interviewer: Thank you, sir. The next question is that considering the historical evolution of Delhi, what sociological insights can we gain from analyzing the imprint of various regimes and cultures on the city? How does this historical evolution shape the city's social fabric?

Prof Sanjay Srivastava: Delhi's history, both ancient and modern, has had a significant impact on the city. The distribution of land for resettlement based on economic status is one example of how historical events shaped the city's social fabric. Additionally, the perception of historical monuments in Delhi is influenced by societal factors. For instance, if we question whether it would be preferable to build affordable housing in the place of Lal Qila (Red Fort), we would be surprised by the number of people who would agree.

Interviewer: That's a very interesting view. We often don't consider the impact recent historical developments have had on Delhi. Delhi has also witnessed many regimes in the past, what impact do you feel they have had on the culture of Delhi

Prof Sanjay Srivastava: Unlike other parts of the country, such as Lucknow or Patna, where the cultural impact of past regimes is more pronounced, the rapid changes in Delhi have diminished the cultural influence of these regimes in modern times.

Interviewer: The Delhi government has been actively creating "green spaces" and well-equipped public parks in Delhi NCR. What are the underlying processes that shape the government's approach to developing these parks? Additionally, what factors contribute to the renewed interest of people in visiting parks?

Prof Sanjay Srivastava: The development of parks in Delhi is influenced by several factors. The government allocates more resources to the capital, and the aspirations of the middle class for such spaces also play an important role. The middle class's awareness of health consciousness, given their sedentary office lifestyles, drives this demand for parks. Gated communities also contribute to the increased demand for parks. However, it is worth noting, in these gated communities, parks are becoming privatized and limiting public access. Additionally, the parks with public access like Lodhi Garden, are often located far from local communities, making them inaccessible to those who lack transportation or live in less affluent areas.

Interviewer: How do you think these parks will impact the social interactions in the city?

Prof Sanjay Srivastava: Parks serve as spaces for social interaction. Often it is the lack of such interaction and connectedness that prompts people to move away from urban areas and opt for gated communities. This can result in people spending time predominantly with individuals similar to themselves, leading to a lack of familiarity with strangers and, consequently, mistrust. Such mistrust contributes to the negative treatment of strangers that we often observe in Delhi.

Interviewer: As the nation's capital, how does Delhi reflect in the understanding of the common people? How does the city's status influence the social dynamics and political awareness of its inhabitants?

Prof Sanjay Srivastava: There is a prevailing sense of belonging to Delhi among its residents. Political consciousness in the city is highly contextual and localized. One would say that Seemapuri Delhi is very different from Karol Bagh Delhi. Consequently, while consciousness exists, it is not a collective one.

Interviewer: Do you think that political aspirations or movements in Delhi are different, being the nation's capital?

Prof Sanjay Srivastava: The political movements in Delhi differ significantly from those in other regions, as they are not centered around an 'us versus them' mentality, which is common in many parts of the country. Unlike regions where insider-outsider politics and regionalism dominate, Delhi's political landscape is more focused on issues affecting the middle class and the underprivileged. Matters such as land issues, urban development, gender-related concerns, and sexuality gain substantial prominence in the city's political discourse. Moreover, Delhi's diverse population and its inclusive environment contribute to greater acceptance and safety for the LGBTQ+ community compared to many other regions in the country. The presence of well-functioning educational institutions like Delhi University and JNU plays a vital role in enhancing the political awareness of the city's inhabitants. These institutions foster critical thinking, activism, and engagement in political discussions, making Delhi's residents more politically conscious and informed. As the nation's capital, Delhi also receives special attention regarding national policies and decisions, leading to heightened awareness among its residents about broader national-level issues and their potential impact on the city and the country as a whole.

Interviewer: In recent times, the history and culture of Delhi have been increasingly presented as heritage. For example, we observe the organization of multiple heritage walks and the mapping of food trails in Old Delhi. From the perspective of Urban Sociology, how should we understand these developments? What implications do they have for the city and its residents?'

Prof Sanjay Srivastava: The concept of food trails is a direct outcome of the growing interest in authentic travel experiences that go beyond conventional tourist activities like visiting famous landmarks. It reflects people's desire to immerse themselves in the local culture by tasting regional cuisines and exploring the city from the perspective of locals. Additionally, these endeavors aim to uncover and reveal lesser-known monuments and historical sites, offering a more comprehensive understanding of Delhi's heritage.

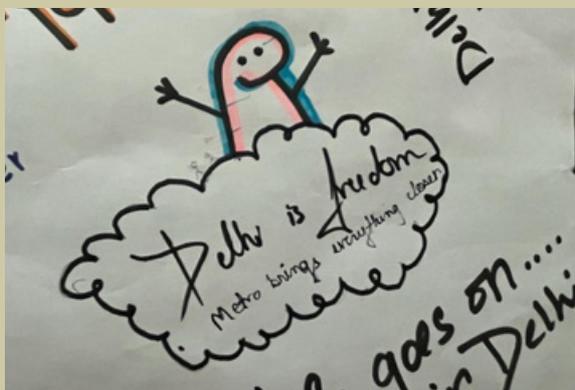
Interviewer: How can we sociologically locate street art within the context of Delhi? In what ways does street art contribute to the overall idea and identity of Delhi as a city?

Prof Sanjay Srivastava: Street art in Delhi is relatively limited and often government-sponsored. There is a lack of space that allows artists, especially those with limited resources, to showcase their work and ideas. The presence of more street art is crucial as it represents a certain kind of urban democracy. One possible reason for the scarcity of street art in Delhi could be the higher levels of surveillance due to its status as the capital. The top-down approach to democracy and the emphasis on beautification may restrict the expression of street art.

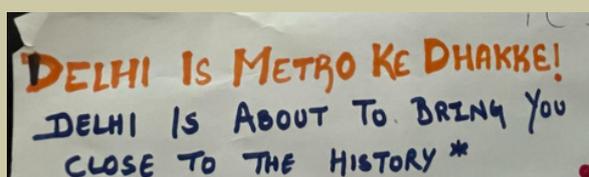
Interviewer: Thank you so much sir. This interview answers all the questions we received. Thank you for your time today. I am sure these insights will be eye-opening for our readers.

M E R A K I

Delhi as they say is an emotion. It is a combination of historical romanticism, the various delicacies it has to offer and its actual realities ranging from pollution, crime and safety. Best described as a “love-hate” relationship, Delhi to some is home. To some, a chance to turn about their lives and begin anew.

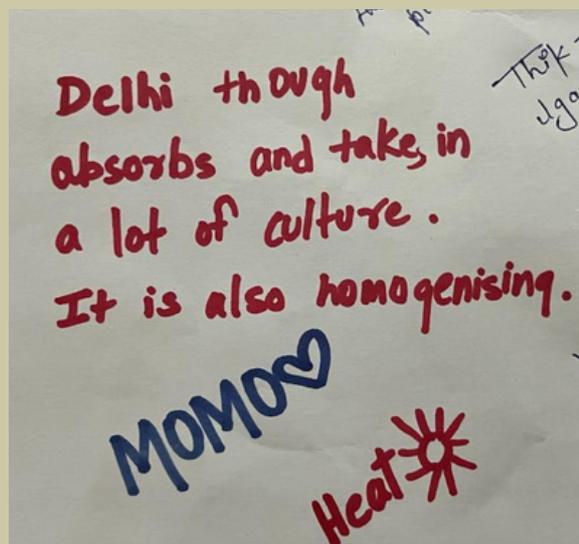


Taking the idea of the dialectics that mark the city’s existence, Team Meraki initiated a thought-provoking exercise by putting up a poster on the board of the Department of Sociology, inviting the student population of Jesus and Mary College to share “What have you heard about Delhi?”



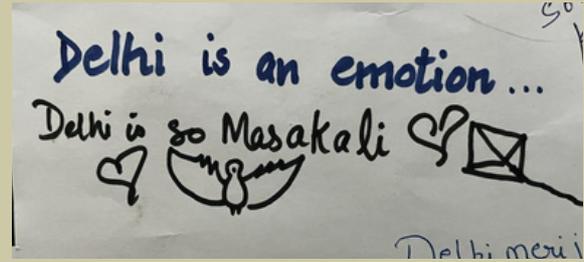
The various insights and impressions unravelled the diversity of students’ experiences and perceptions regarding the city.

The poster shaped in the form of one of the city’s most iconic monuments, the Humayun’s Tomb, brought out fascinating insights by respondents regarding the material culture of the city from the famous Delhi momos, Delhi Metro which brings everything closer to Sarojini Nagar as expressions of their intimate relationship with the city. This material aspect of Delhi was seen as a symbol of freedom for some. For others, the issue of Delhi’s extreme weather condition and pollution took precedence.

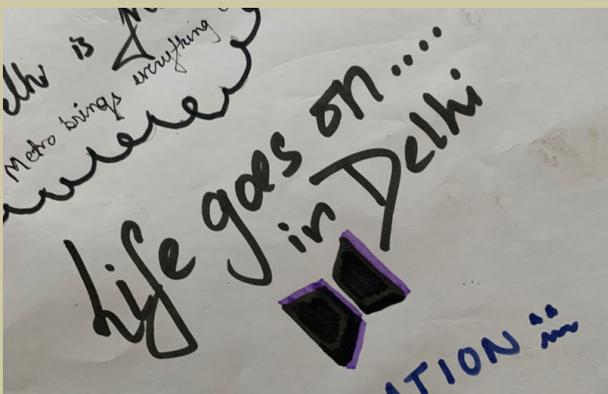


M E R A K I

Some of the recurring themes expressed included the high levels of pollution that plague the city and have become one of its characteristic features as well as the unique cultural experiences that the city provides be it in terms of its diversity with it being seen not only in terms of magnitude but also its homogenizing tendencies. The phrase "Life goes on" used for the city signifies the unwavering resilience of its people with individuals navigating their daily lives, driven by aspirations, obligations and routines, as the city does not stop for anyone. At the same time, the freedom that the city provides and the inevitable paradoxical relationship that many have with the city encapsulating the dialectical ideational and material existence of the city also found expression in the poster.



The display intended to explore and present a visual insight into the differing realities of the city that provide a vastly different and personal experience based on a complex of identity markers and personal experiences.



TEAM MERAKI



Aanya Sharma



Aditi Gupta



Aditi Krishnamurthy



Annapurna



Hadia Rehman



Hitika Kalra



Nistula Singh



Saanya Sodhi



Sumedha Vashista



Vani Nirwan



Vanshika Agarwal



Yuvika

FACULTY CO-ORDINATORS 2022-2023



Dr. Devika Mittal



Dr. Sabiha Mazid

BATCH OF 2023



BATCH OF 2024



BATCH OF 2025/26



"The city is something more than a congeries of individuals and of social conveniences; something more, also, than a mere constellation of institutions and administrative devices... The city is, rather, a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions, and of the organised attitudes and sentiments that inhere in these customs and are transmitted with this tradition. The city is not, in other words, merely a physical mechanism and an artificial construction. It is involved in the vital processes of the people who compose it".

— An excerpt from "The City" (1925) by Robert E. Park

