

Fragrance Lane

A visual ethnography research of Ittarwala community
of Old Delhi

Special Project by

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Liza, Mumtaz, Sajda, Khan, Drakkar, Silver Bird,
Al Sofiya, Free Desire, Salma, Golden Dust,
Moon Star, Cigar, Al Dua, Al Amiri, Shamama,
Aliffat, Deep Red, Al Meezaan, Khus, Paris, Kash
Ka, Ruh khus, Firdus, Passion, Amrg, Majmua,
Mehboob E Laila, Ruby, Ace, Aziza, Labbiak, Ya
Habibe, Tess, Akidat, White Musk, Angelo Light,
Dark Blue, Qurat Rose. Amrige White Ul



Acknowledgments

I wish to express my sincere thanks to my guide Prof. Nina Sabnani, my informants Muhammad Abid Ali and Taheer, my friends Susan Thomas, Prashant Gupta, Aman Rupesh Xaxa for their support and encouragement throughout the project. Their suggestions added real value to my project.

I am grateful to their contribution towards my understanding of the issue and sharing their insight and knowledge on the same.



Abstract

In this fast moving world, where people travel at the speed of sound, there exist things which not only stops time but also takes you back into history. I'm referring to people and traditions that continue to carry forward the richness of our culture into the modern era with some élan.

One such article is the tradition of "Ittar" / "Attar". Fragrances have an important role to play when we come to discuss the human senses that define our existence. Throughout ages people have been trying to capture fragrances which excite our emotions, feelings and desires.

A family of Ittar makers who mastered this art, pleased the old rulers, nawabs and nizams of India with their ability of identifying and collecting the natural fragrances for them, are now situated in Old Delhi.

This visual ethnographic study is an attempt to understand the socio-economic condition and position of one of the 7th generation in this business from Kannauj of Uttar Pradesh by being a part of their regular life for several days. The study talks about their life and approach towards the modern world.



The day here starts with regular activities like labours, shop attendents, rickshaw puller etc. having tea and smokes, but as soon as the shops open the narrow lanes becomes super active, no traffic rules applies here, the only thing one should keep in mind is to keep on walking and anything can come from anywhere.



Ethnography

Clifford Geertz has best described the approach: “It is . . . the kind of material produced by long term mainly qualitative, highly participative, and almost obsessively fine comb field study in confined contexts.” (1973:23).

Mead has articulated this approach to ethnography. “The human scientist has had to learn how to relate self-knowledge of him-or herself as a multisensory being with a unique history as a member of a specific culture at a specific period of ongoing experience and how to include as far as possible this disciplined self-awareness in observations on other lives and in other cultures.” (1976:907).



The old city of “Shahjahanabad” was constructed by *Shah Jahan*, he was the emperor of the Mughal Empire in the Indian Subcontinent from 1628 until 1658. The name *Shah Jahan* comes from Persian meaning “King of the World.” He was the fifth mughal emperor after *Babur*, *Humayun*, *Akbar*, and *Jahangir*



Methodology

As this was the first time I was doing an ethnographic study of a community and since I do not have any formal training in such a field of study or research, I didn't have any idea on how to proceed. I did not know how to approach the subject, how to talk to them and what kind of information to glean from them.

But I decided to carry on trying to understand everything as I would want to about a family or community engaged in a trade that is ancient and now on the verge of being corporatized and losing the charm of the family run businesses.

So the first thing I did was to identify the city where I was most likely to find ittar makers, where I could engage them in a conversation, speak their language and understand their culture. Thus I thought of going back to Delhi, which I was familiar with, especially old Delhi (Chandni Chowk area) where I had spent a lot of time as a student photographing the unique architecture, culture, ambience inspired and reminiscent of the Mughal way

of life. I knew that if I had to find ittar makers especially families that had been engaged in this trade for generations, I would have most chances of finding them in Chandni Chowk, as ittar was introduced and made popular in India by the Mughals themselves.

So the first challenge I faced was to find a person who owns an ittar shop, the second one was how do I approach them?

After landing in Delhi, I made a couple of visits to Chandni Chowk and was successful in narrowing down one ittar shop. Now on to the next challenge...


After some reading, I understood ethnography to be a research method based on observing people in their natural environment rather than in a formal research setting. So I tried to follow this in my work. I tried to be as informal and friendly with my subjects. This is difficult for obvious reasons in a megacity like Delhi. People are suspicious of over-friendly people and

perceive deception in someone who pretends to be over-familiar with them. However, I knew I could not curry favour with them if I did not try to be friendly either.

The first person I got introduced to at the shop happened to be a young man, about my age, so I could connect to him easily. I introduced myself as a student, and explained the purpose of my visit and fortunately this made my work easier with him.

To make things clearer for him I explained to him what I have to do and what I expect from him. I told him that I would visit him every day for a few weeks and talk about his trade and observe what all happens in his shop.

After the first couple of visits I met his father, with him I had to change tactics/approach. As the head of the family and the business he had little patience for idle chit-chat and his son too became more serious and less talkative when his father was around. So taking a cue from the son I adopted the manner of

A close-up photograph of a metal shutter handle. A black net is tied to the handle, containing several green chillies and a single green lemon. The background is a weathered metal surface with horizontal ridges and some rust. The lighting is soft, highlighting the textures of the metal and the freshness of the produce.

This was the day when the shop was closed, lemon and green chilli woven together tied on the handle of the shutter of the shop are supposed to keep away the bad omen, a man early morning comes everyday and gives it to every shopkeeper, that is his early morning business and later he works in a shop as one of the attendant.



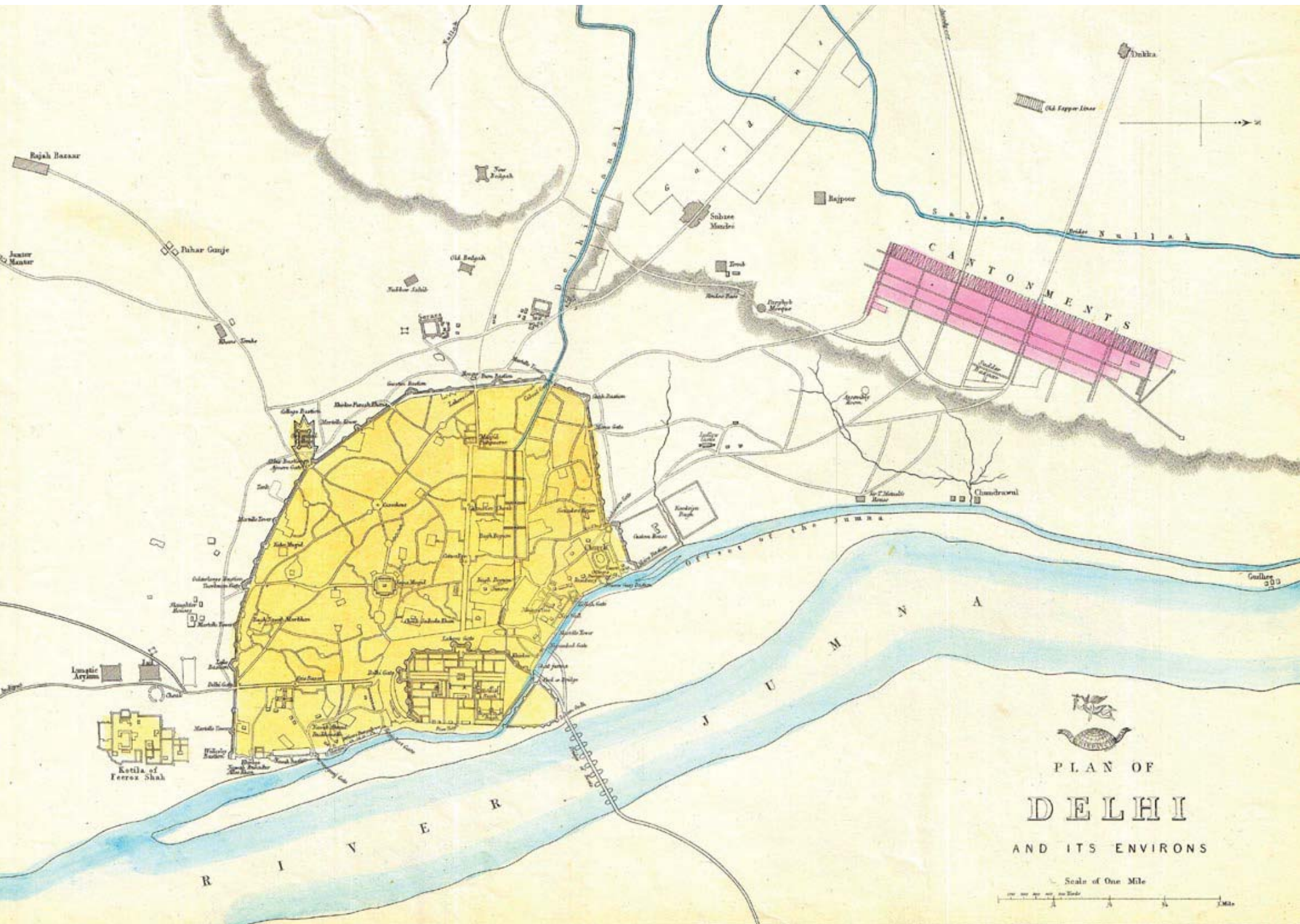
a potential customer to converse with him. Though I introduced myself and my work, I continued to show interest and even bought a few fragrances from him to keep him interested in talking to me. This ploy worked but my explanation about my work did not quite help as Abbu jaan did not quite understand why there would be any scholarly interest in his trade.

Meanwhile, as the father came to the shop occasionally and only to interact with customers rated high according to their buying capacity, my daily interactions were mostly with the sons. My subject also agreed to let me shoot in the shop.

With each passing day, my subject became familiar with me and got used to my presence in his shop and my work became easier. We had started conversing like friends and at the end of each day I would go back home or someplace and make notes of what all we had discussed that day.

It is frequently emphasized that methodologies are developed for / with particular projects, they are interwoven with theory and 'as most

good researchers know, it is not unusual to make up the methods as you go along. The methods should serve the aim of the research, not the research server the aims of method' (McGuigan 1997:2). Moreover, as Josephides points out, 'our ethnography strategies are also shaped by the subjects' situations, their global as well as local perceptions, and their demands and expectations of us'. Therefore, 'There can be no blueprint for how to do fieldwork. It really depends on the local people, and for this reason we have to construct our theories of how to do fieldwork in the field' (Josephides 1997:32, original italics)



PLAN OF
DELHI
 AND ITS ENVIRONS

Scale of One Mile

Old Delhi

Old Delhi, the walled city of Delhi, was earlier known as “Shahjahanabad” by Mughal emperor Shahjahan. All the members of the court used to stay there, it was filled with mansions of nobility called “Haveli”. There are eight gates in the the walled city, named after whichever place they lead to, like, Nigambodh Gate, Kashmiri Gate, Mori Gate, Kabuli Gate, Lahori Gate, Ajmeri Gate, Turkman Gate and Delhi Gate.

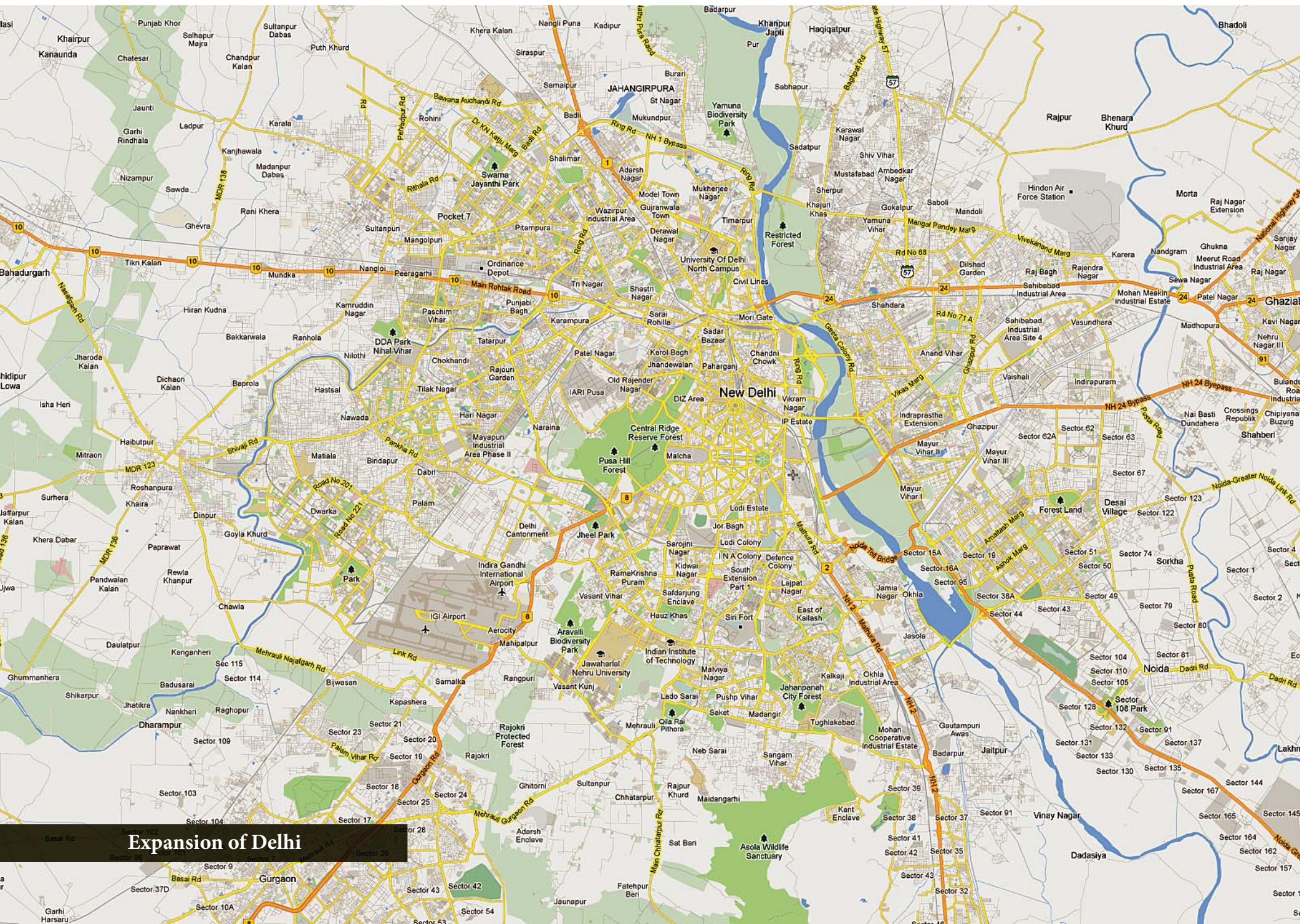
Old Delhi is a very unique place, it is connected with the modern world through New Delhi. One can find old Mughal and colonial British architecture as well as the modern structure which caters to today’s globe-trotters, in addition to a mix of culture from various parts of India as Delhi is the capital. The place is very much influenced by the near by states’ cultures like Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh. A majority of business community that one sees in Delhi is from Punjab, so this has had more of an impact on the culture of Delhi. On the other hand Old Delhi continues to retain the influence

of the Islamic regime, market, expansion and the layout.

Chandni Chowk was the main bazaar during the Islamic reign, which faces the great Red Fort of Delhi, it then branches out in small lanes in several directions with different types of shops in each lane. Nowadays its a place where whole sale business takes place. But the planning of the area is still the same as it was in olden days, the architecture, roads etc., the buildings in this area are mainly influenced by the Islamic architecture, the roads are narrow, the doors are beautifully decorated. But the influence of the modern construction has encroached upon this place as well. As the old structures suffer neglect and get damaged, the new constructions take their place and make it uglier everyday.

City of Sajahanabad.

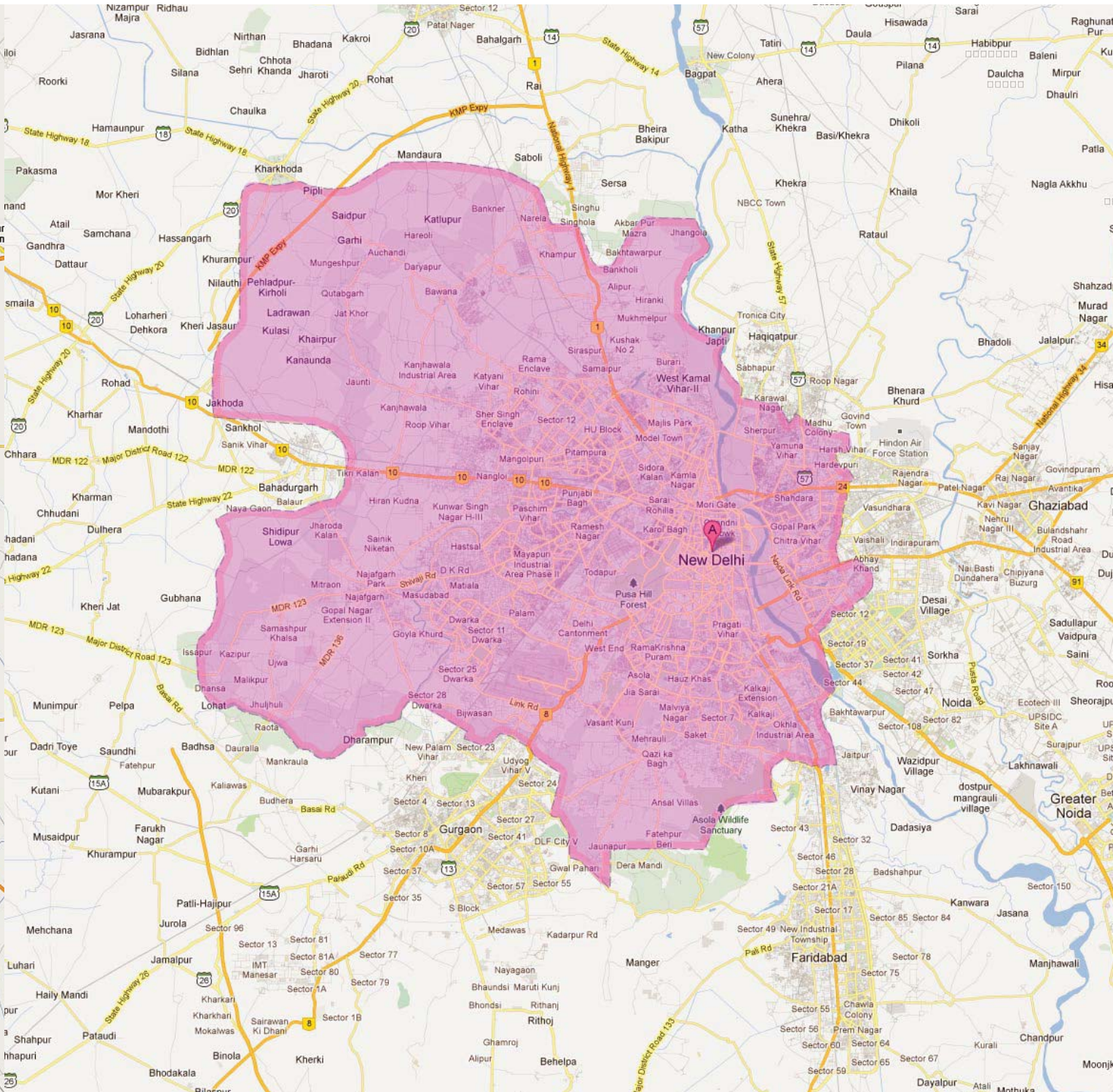
1863 Dispatch Atlas Map of Delhi. Source: wikipedia.org

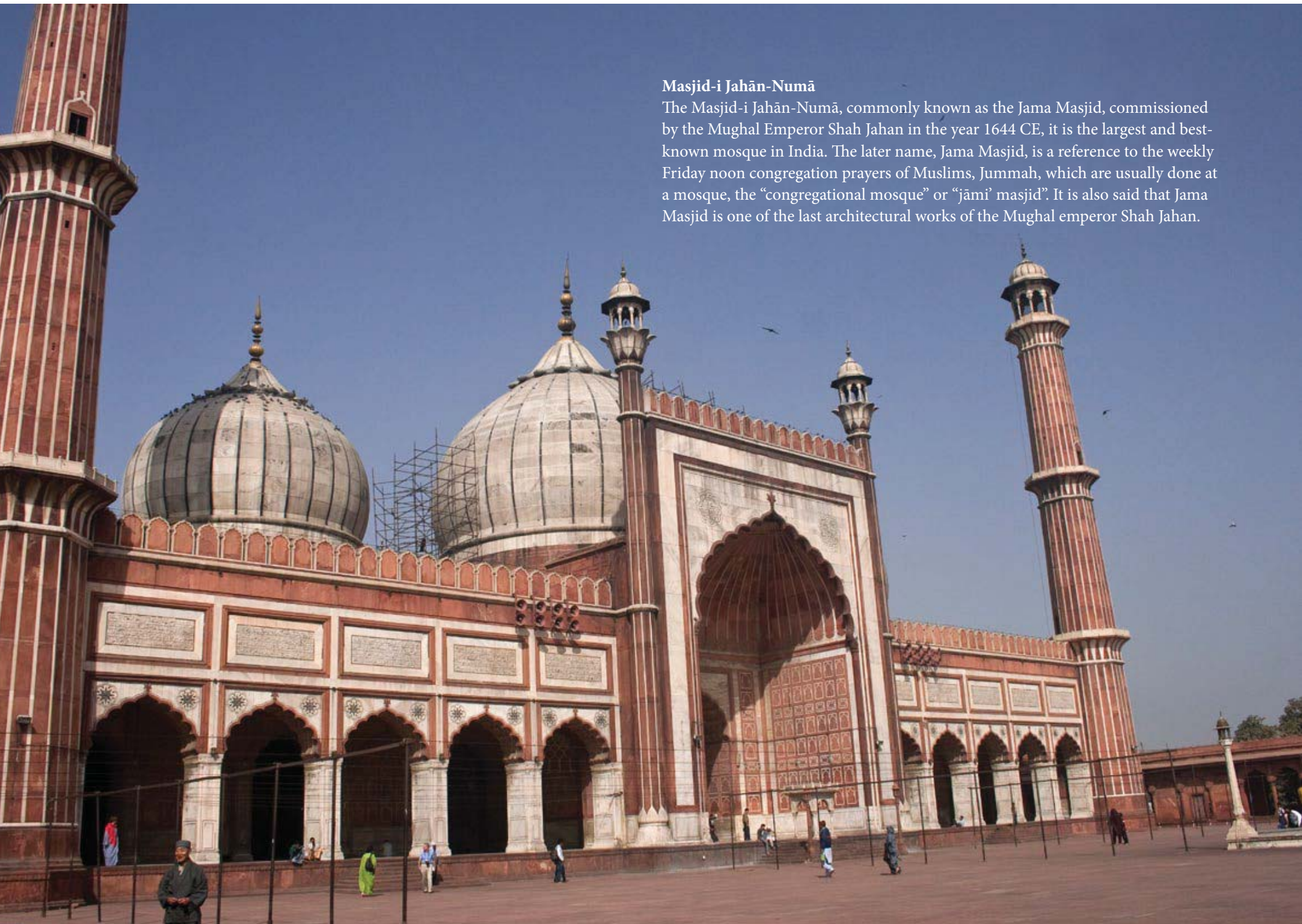


Expansion of Delhi

The map illustrates the significant expansion of Delhi, showing the city's growth beyond its traditional boundaries. Key features include:

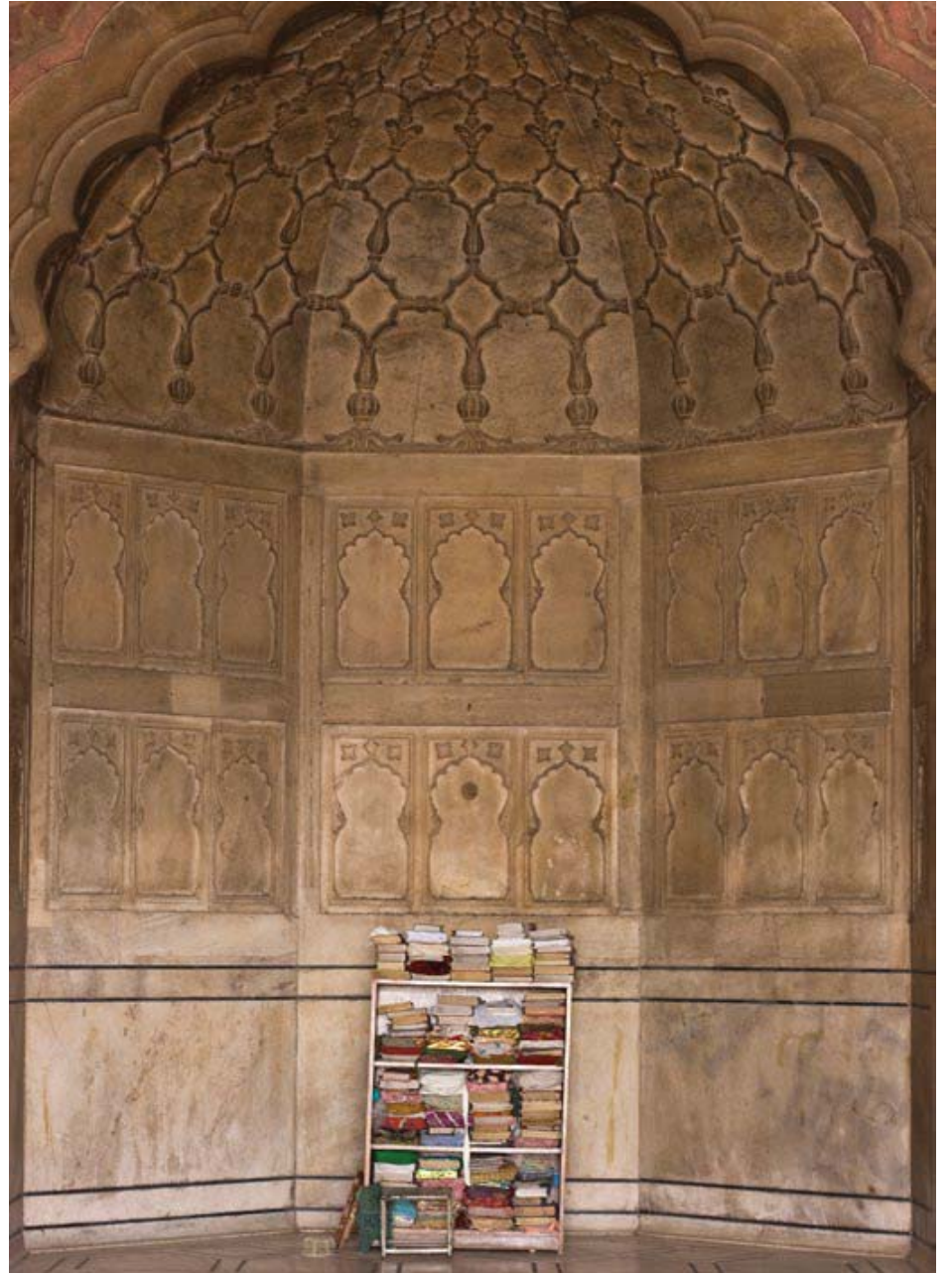
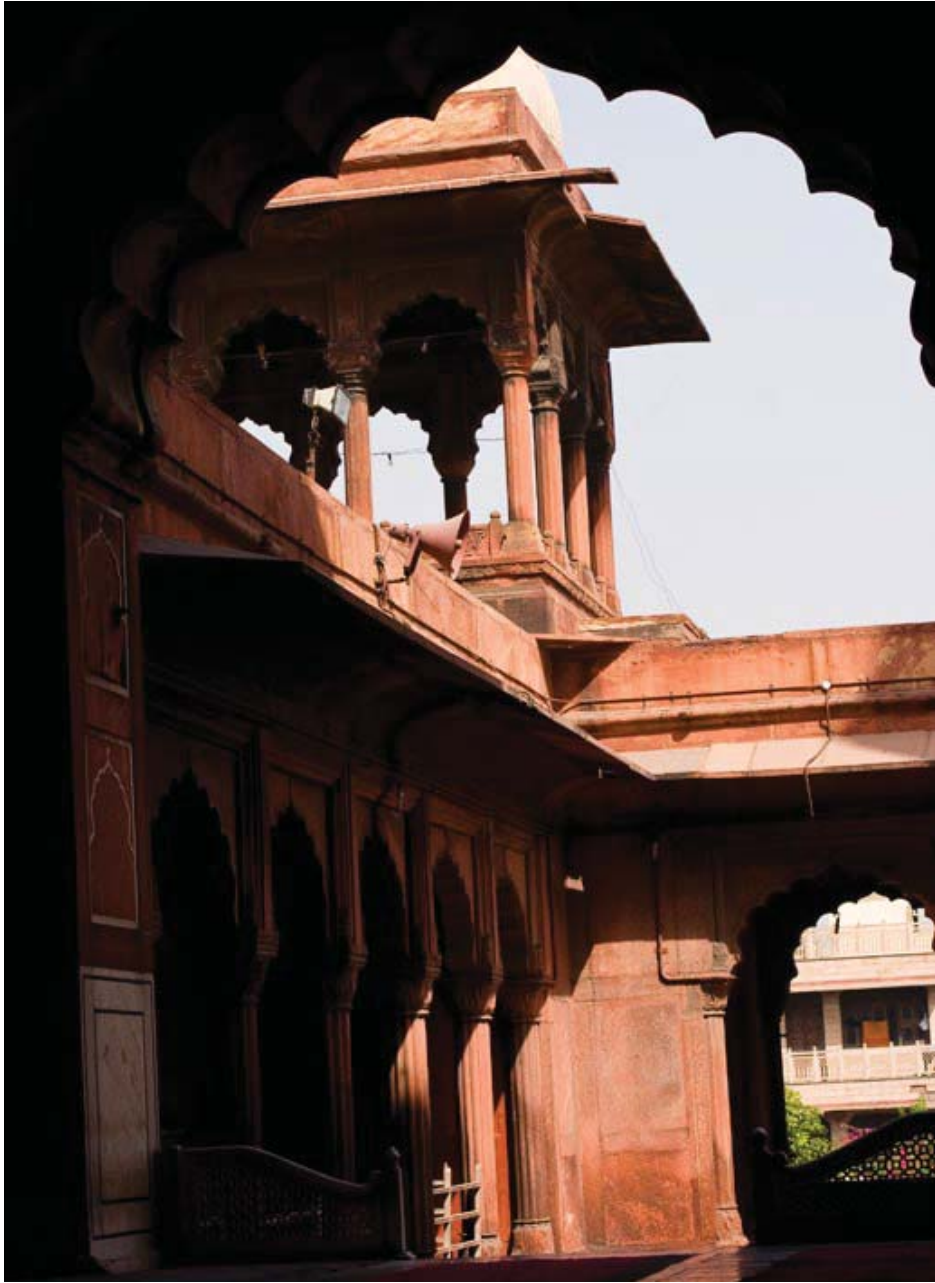
- Major Highways:** NH 1, NH 2, NH 24, and NH 57 are prominent, connecting the city to surrounding regions.
- Industrial and Residential Sectors:** Numerous sectors are labeled, such as Sector 1 through Sector 175, indicating the city's rapid urbanization.
- Green Spaces:** Parks like Jheel Park, Aravalli Biodiversity Park, and Asola Wildlife Sanctuary are shown, highlighting the city's efforts to maintain greenery.
- Infrastructure:** The IGI Airport and various educational institutions like the University of Delhi are marked, showing the city's role as a major hub.

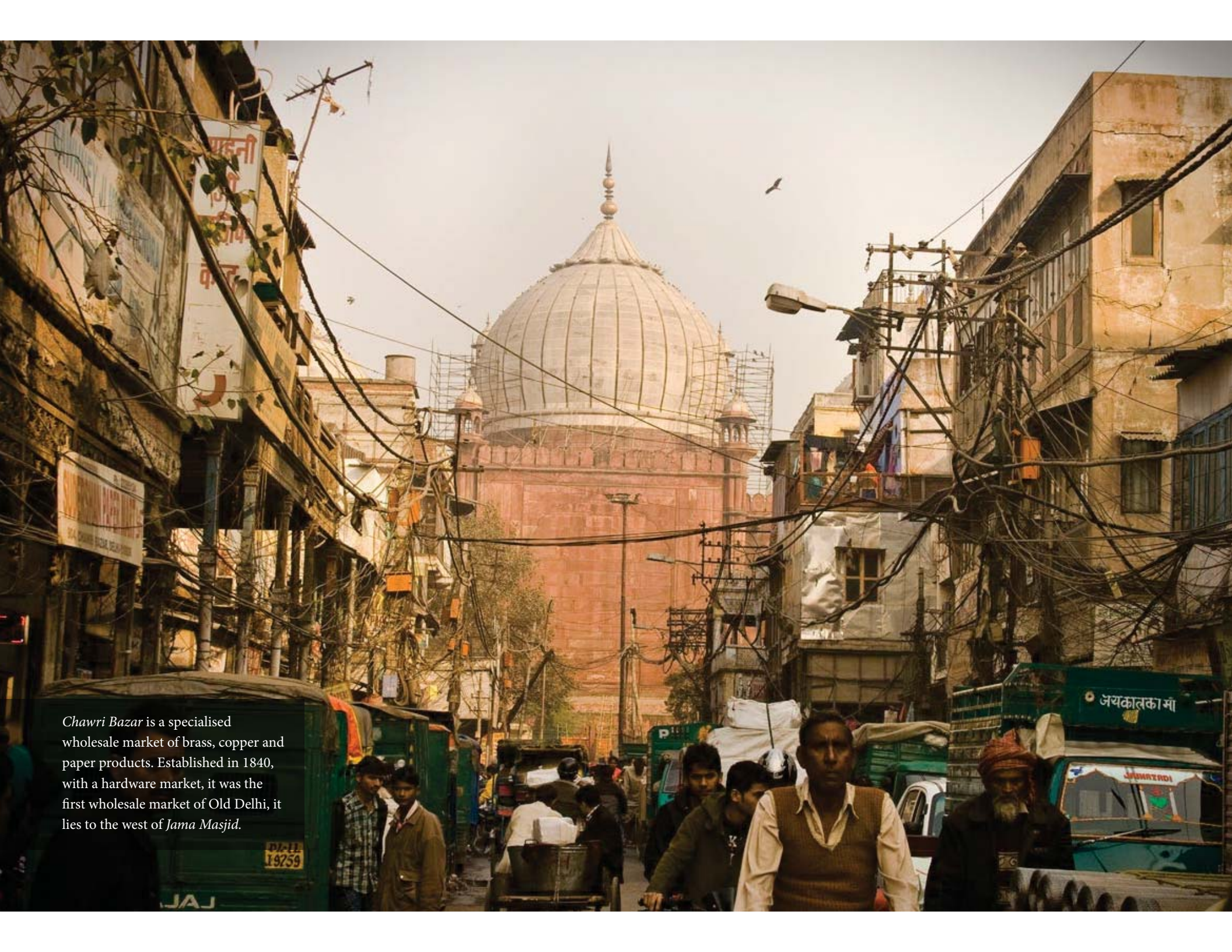




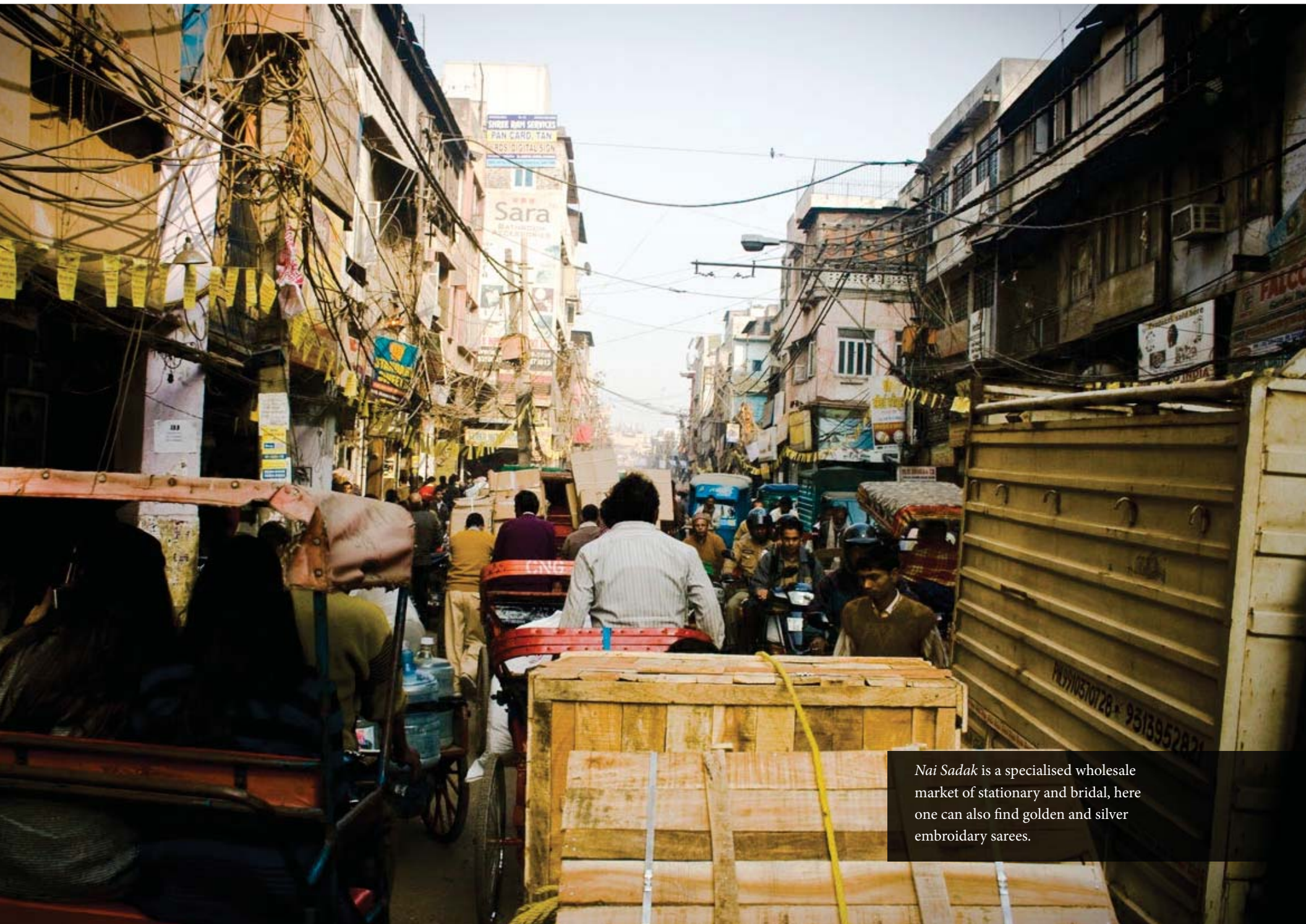
Masjid-i Jahān-Numā

The Masjid-i Jahān-Numā, commonly known as the Jama Masjid, commissioned by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in the year 1644 CE, it is the largest and best-known mosque in India. The later name, Jama Masjid, is a reference to the weekly Friday noon congregation prayers of Muslims, Jummah, which are usually done at a mosque, the “congregational mosque” or “jāmi’ masjid”. It is also said that Jama Masjid is one of the last architectural works of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan.

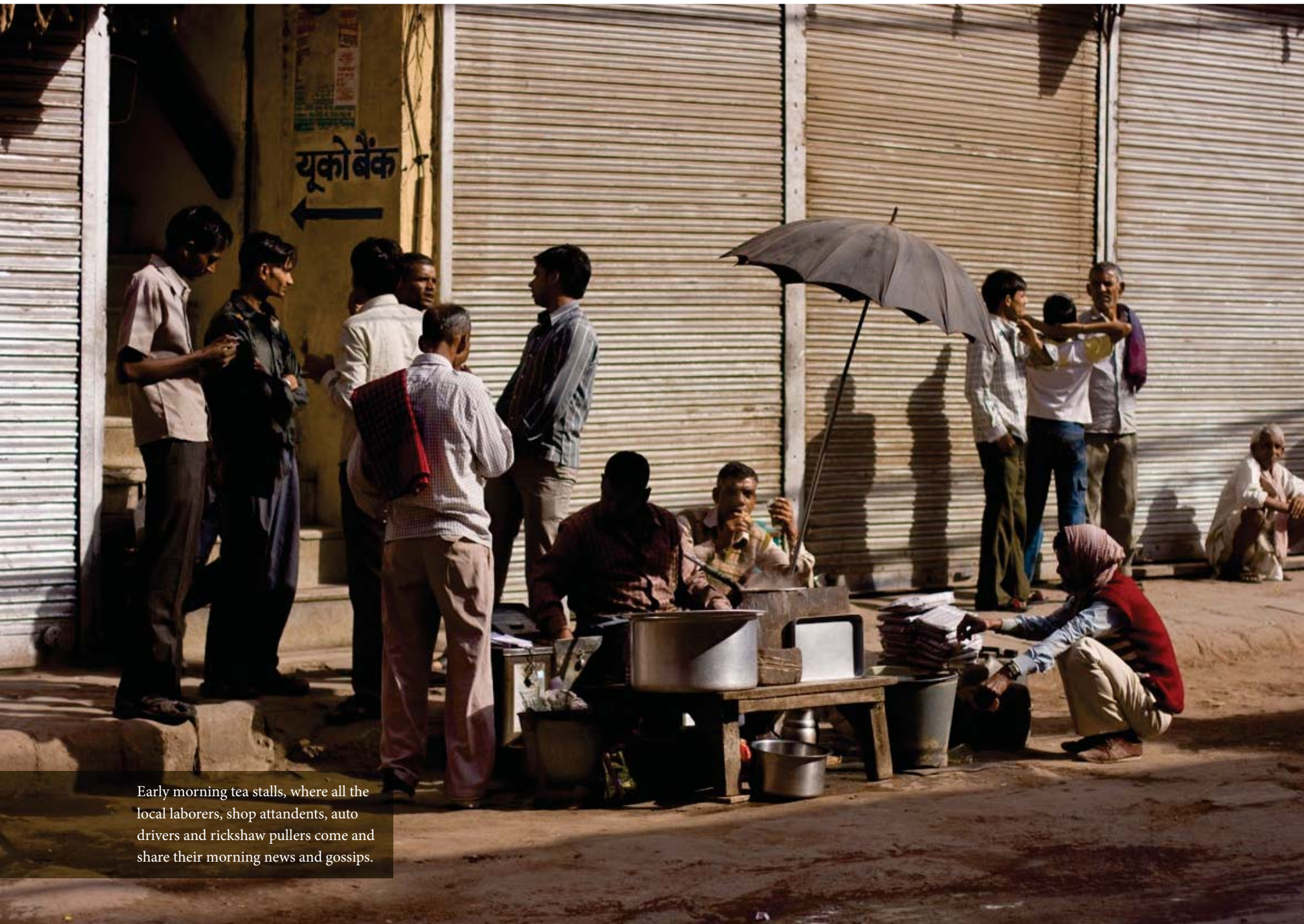




Chawri Bazar is a specialised wholesale market of brass, copper and paper products. Established in 1840, with a hardware market, it was the first wholesale market of Old Delhi, it lies to the west of Jama Masjid.



Nai Sadak is a specialised wholesale market of stationary and bridal, here one can also find golden and silver embroidery sarees.



Early morning tea stalls, where all the local laborers, shop attendants, auto drivers and rickshaw pullers come and share their morning news and gossips.



One of the bakery shop on the narrow lane of *Matia Mahal*, the lane I used to visit as my informant shop was in the same lane, there are various other kind of shops but one can find number of bakery shops here.



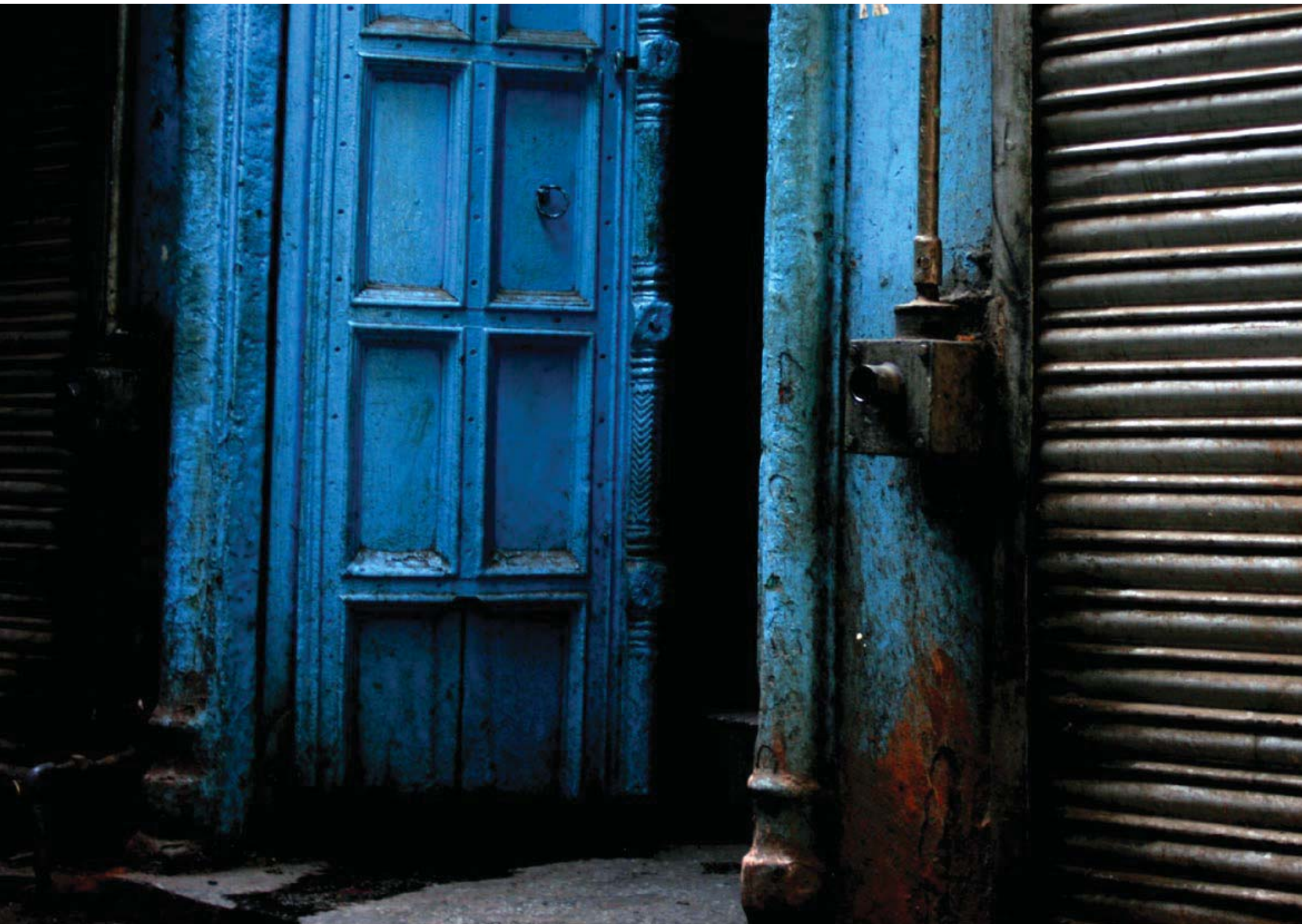


About Ittar

Attar also known as ittar is a natural perfume oil derived from botanical sources. Most commonly these oils are taken from the botanical material through hydro or steam distillation. Oils can also be expressed by chemical means but generally natural perfumes which qualify as Ittar/Attars are distilled naturally. The oils obtained from the herbs flowers and wood are generally distilled into a wood base such as sandalwood and then aged. The aging period can last from one to ten years depending on the botanicals used and the results desired.

These all-natural perfumes are highly concentrated and therefore are usually offered for sale in small quantities and have traditionally been offered in decorated crystal cut type bottles or small jeweled decanters. Ittars are popular throughout the Middle East, the Far East and India as well as Pakistan. Ittars have been used in the entire Eastern world for thousands of years. These 100% pure and natural perfumes are free of alcohol and

chemicals and so the problems faced in the West by perfume lovers are irrelevant to most Eastern perfume lovers. Natural perfumes are affordable because they are so concentrated that a small bottle will last the user several weeks, if not months. Due to the purity and the nature of oils, there is very little chance of spoilage unless a food based carrier oil is used to cut the concentrated pure oil.





Brief History

The word 'attar', 'ittar' or 'othr' is basically an Arabic word which means 'scent'; this in turn is believed to have been derived from the Persian word Atr, meaning 'fragrance'.

The story of Indian perfumes is as old as the civilization itself. Archaeological evidence shows the earliest inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent held plants in great reverence. With the passage of time, scented oils were extracted by pressing, pulverizing or distilling aromatic vegetable and animal produce. Early indications of this activity are available from the perfume jars and terracotta containers of the Indus Valley civilization, where archeological work has revealed round copper stills, used for the distillation process that are at least five-thousand years old. These stills are called degs. Following the seasons of the flowers, traditional ittar-makers, with their degs, traveled all over India to make their fresh ittars on-the-spot. Even now, a few traditional ittar-makers still travel with their degs to be close to the harvest. Their

equipment has changed little, if at all.

A large number of references to cosmetics and perfumes in Sanskrit literature were found like in the Brhatsamhita is a 6th century Sanskrit encyclopedia by Varahamihira (505 AD – 587 AD). Cosmetics and perfumes making were mainly practiced for the purpose of worship, sale and sensual enjoyment. Gandhayukti gave recipes for making scents. It gives a list of eight aromatic ingredients used for making scents. They were: Rodhara, Usira, Bignonia, Aguru, Musta, Vana, Priyangu, and Pathya. The Gandhayukti also gave recipes for mouth perfumes, bath powders, incense and talcum powder. The manufacture of rose water began perhaps in the nineteenth century AD. The earliest distillation of ittar was mentioned in the Ayurvedic text Charaka Samhita. The Harshacharita, written in 7th century AD in northern India, mentions use of fragrant agarwood oil.

In ancient India, ittar was prepared by



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In ancient India, ittar was prepared by placing precious flowers and sacred plants into a water or vegetable oil. Slowly the plants and flowers would infuse the water/oil with their delicate fragrance. The plant and flower material would then be removed and a symphony of their aromatic beauty would be held in the ittar. These ittars were then worn

as a sacred perfume or to anoint.

Ittar figures into some of the romantic stories of a bygone era. Its patrons included great poets like the legendary Mirza Ghalib. When Ghalib met his beloved in the winter, he rubbed his hands and face with ittar heena.

In Ain-e-Akbari, Abul Fazal, has mentioned that Akbar used ittar daily and burnt incense sticks in gold and silver censers. A princess's bath was incomplete without incense and ittar. A very popular ittar with the Mughal princes was ood, prepared in Assam.

Situated on the banks of the sacred River Ganges, 80 km from Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, is the now almost forgotten ancient city of Kannauj, once the capital of the famed Emperor Harshavardhana. Today it prides itself as the 'Attar City' or the perfume city of India. Kannauj in Uttar Pradesh India is a major producing city of ittar. Here, there is a legend on how the first ittars were made in the area. The forest dwelling Faqirs and Sadhus (ascetics) used certain perfumed jungle herbs and roots in their bonfires during the winters. The shepherds who grazed their sheep in

that region found the perfume lingering in the burnt wood long after the ascetics left the place. Word spread about this and some enterprising people searched and found the fragrant herbs and roots. Then the experiments on ittar began and the first ittars to be made were Rose and Hina.



*Kannauj in Uttar Pradesh, state of India.
Source: wikipedia.org*



Chandni Chowk, the place has its own flavour, atmosphere, people etc. everything is so busy and fast that one can't stop and relax. One of the busiest street I have ever seen, and all kinds of shops can be found here, in wholesale or retail. The narrow lanes has its own charm, small old shops with treasure like things stored in them. This a picture of a regular crowd on street.



Field Work

Day 01, Monday, 5th of Dec 2011

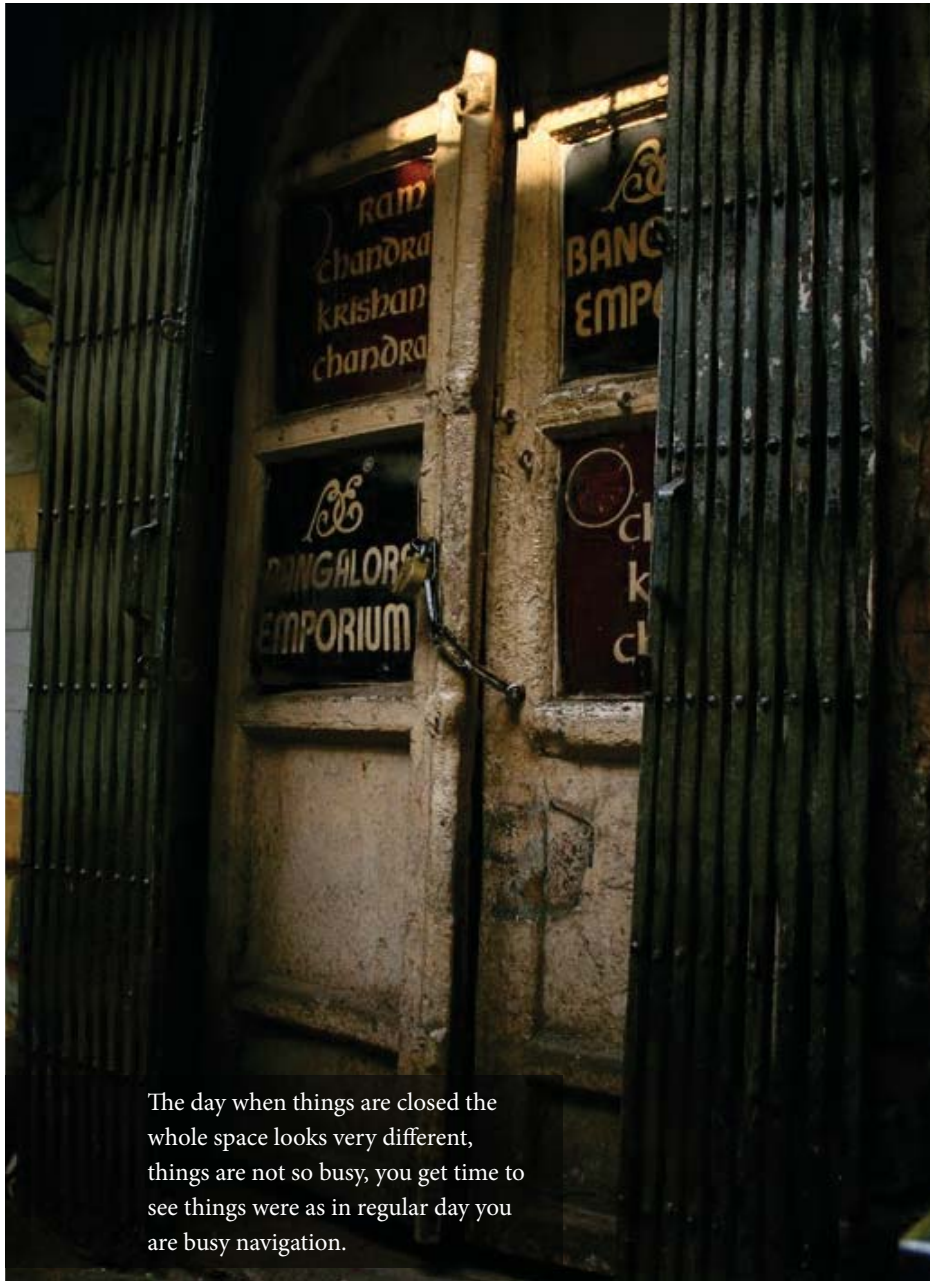
I was in search of a fragrance lane in Purani Delhi (Old Delhi), near Lal Quila (Red fort), Chandini Chowk. I had heard of this lane long time back, and this was my opportunity to have a look through it.

It was 12:30 pm by the time I came out of the metro station of Chawri Bazar. By this time all the shops in Chandini Chowk are open - a very busy place, most of the shops here do business on wholesale/bulk basis. Somehow I navigate my way through people, rickshaws, autos, cycles, motorcycles and cows and ox etc. I had only a vague idea about where I could find the ittar shop. I thought I would be able to find it if I relied on my instinct. But it was not to be. I wasn't able to locate even one shop. After roaming around for half an hour in Nai Sadak and Chawdi Bazar I called one of my friend who used to stay in Chandini Chowk area, he told me

that there is an Urdu Market near Jama Masjid (one of the oldest mosques in India, also the largest in Delhi) and that I might find one there.

I walked around the market my friend suggested but couldn't find one. All I saw were shops selling and buying hardware parts of cars and when I walked a bit further, there were only restaurants and street food shops. The layout of this market as I have known it has been such that each lane is known for shops of one kind of thing. Like one shop is known for dress material, another one for silverware, and the one that I was hoping to find ittar turned out to have only spare parts of cars.

I was already tired of walking for almost 3 to 4 kms in the heavy traffic, so I decided to call off my search for the day.



The day when things are closed the whole space looks very different, things are not so busy, you get time to see things were as in regular day you are busy navigation.





The water dispensers are of no use if the shops are not open, which goes to every shop everyday.

Day 02, Tuesday, 6th of Dec 2011

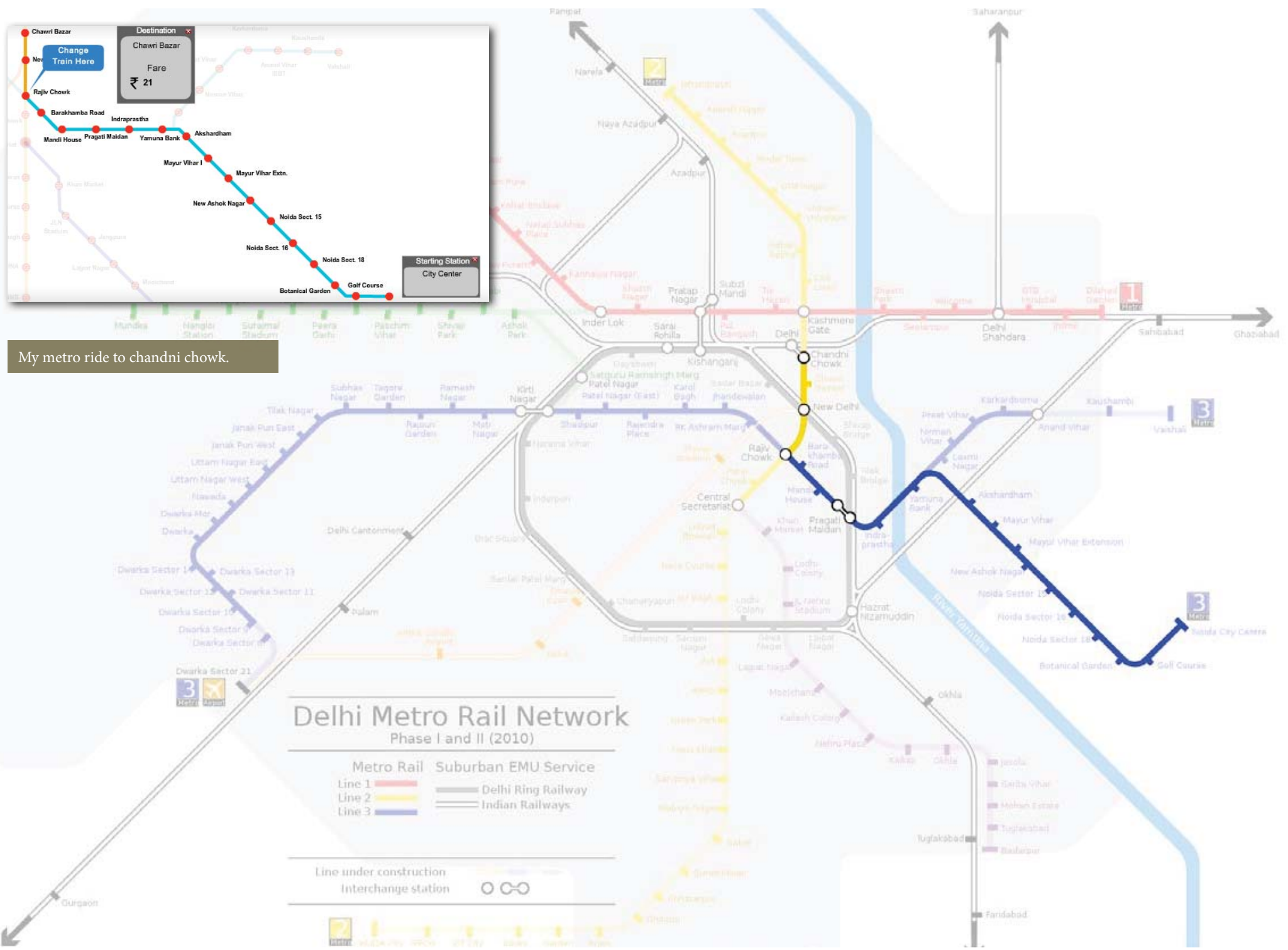
Before starting my day I called one of my friend who was willing to come with me to Chandini Chowk on my expedition of finding one ittarwala, but he told me that its Muharram- a day of remembrance of the muslims and it won't be a good idea to go to Chandini Chowk because everyone will busy. In the evening they also have a procession of which the crowds would not like to be disturbed or photographed, so we dropped the plan. But after that I thought I can visit some near by places which might interesting, so I took the metro and went to Chandni Chowk, although most of the places were closed but as usual few things were happening. I have heard of Mirza Galib's house in Ballimaaran, so thought I would discover that, so I got out at Chawri Bazar station and started walking towards Ballimaaran.

Change Train Here

Destination
Chawri Bazar
Fare ₹ 21

Starting Station
City Center

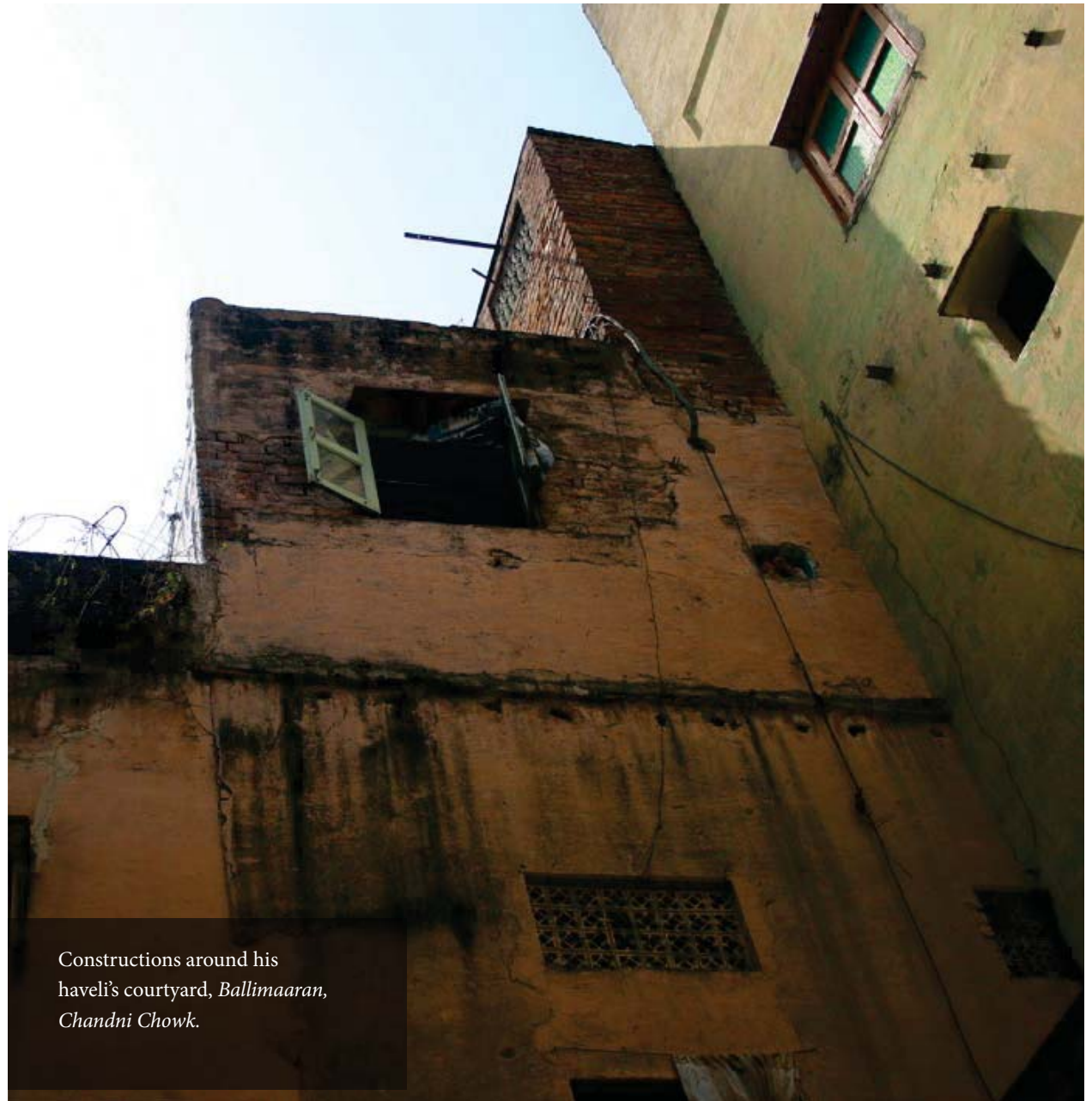
My metro ride to chandni chowk.





Mirza Galib

Mirza Ghalib (Mirza Asadullah Beg Khan December 27, 1797 – died February 15, 1869), was a classical Urdu and Persian poet from India during British colonial rule. He used his pen-name as Ghalib (ghālib means dominant) and Asad (Urdu/Persian: Asad means lion. His honour title was Dabir-ul-Mulk, Najm-ud-Daula. During his lifetime the Mughals were eclipsed and displaced by the British and finally deposed following the defeat of the Indian rebellion of 1857, events that he wrote of. Most notably, he wrote several ghazals during his life, which have since been interpreted and sung in many different ways by different people. He is considered, in South Asia, to be one of the most popular and influential poets of the Urdu language. Ghalib today remains popular not only in India and Pakistan but also amongst diaspora communities around the world.



Constructions around his haveli's courtyard, *Ballimaaran*, *Chandni Chowk*.

Haveli of Mirza Ghalib

The Haveli was the home of the great 19th century poet Mirza Ghalib, during the last years of his life. Ghalib lived here as a tenant. After his death, the building has undergone many an inappropriate addition, alteration, extension, even demolition. In recent times the building has been put to varied uses, including as a coal depot!

With the intention of creating a Memorial to the great poet, at a site associated with him, the Delhi Government acquired portions of the Haveli in December 1999, and has sensitively renovated the premises. Admirers of the poet can now visit his last home.

The conservation works carried out aim to restore the historical character of the building and provide a glimpse of the spirit of Ghalib's time. In this endeavor, the attempt was not to completely restore or mechanically conserve (which in any case, given the existing condition of the building was not possible). The effort was to create a harmonious environment, taking into account what remained here from history, specially the nineteenth century. Thus, while the Mughal lakhari bricks remain exposed, the sandstone paving that had been lost, and a protective coat of Lime plaster has been added.

The essential purpose has been served, that is to allow the visitors a chance to visit the Memorial that invokes the memory of the great poet and provides information about his life and times. It is hoped that with greater public interest the scope of this ongoing project shall soon be expanded.

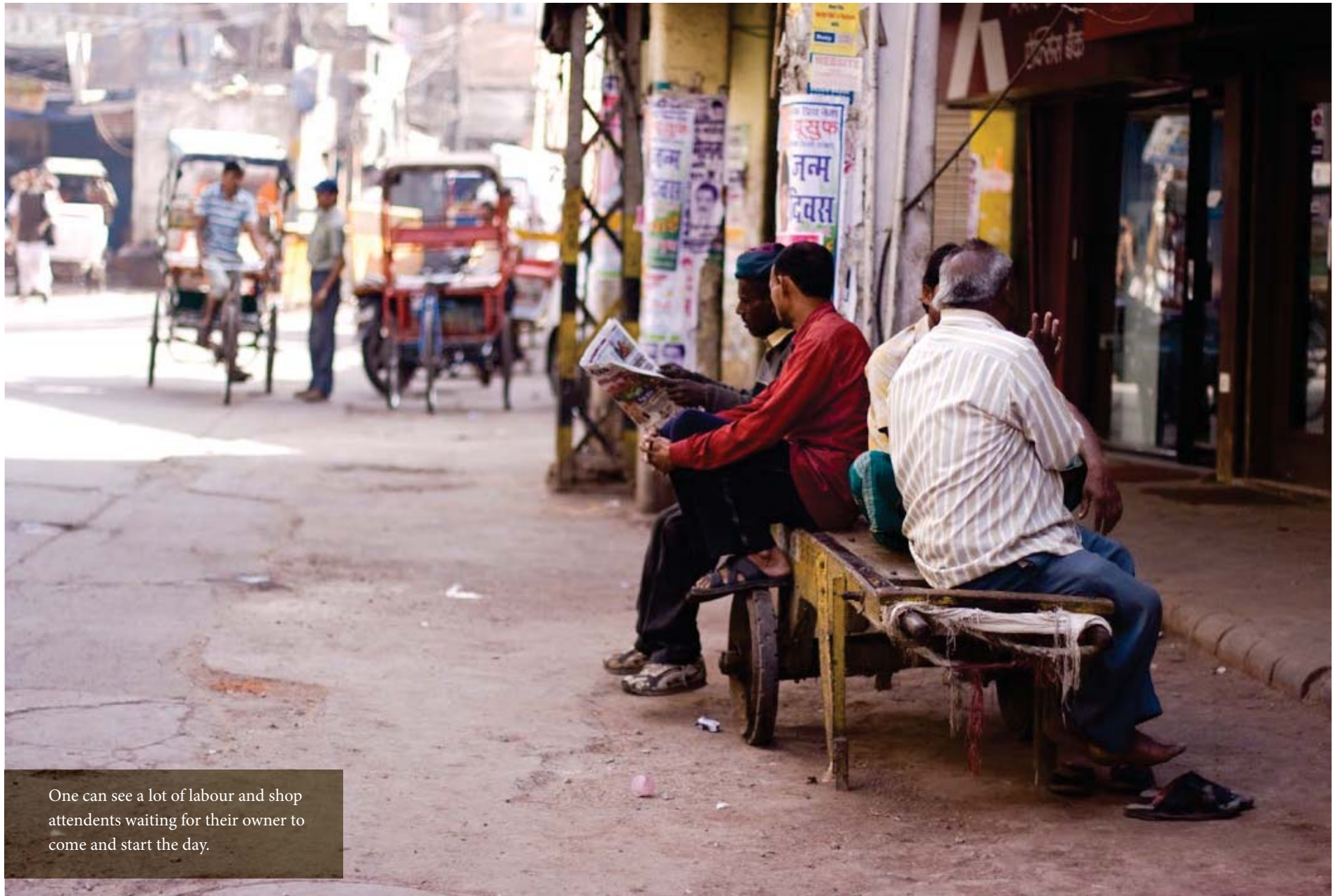


Before

After

SEALS OF MIRZA GHALIB





One can see a lot of labour and shop attendants waiting for their owner to come and start the day.



Day 03, Wednesday, 7th of Dec 2011

Accompanied by my friend I went to find the ittar makers of Chandini Chowk once again. We came out at the Chawdi Bazar metro station and walked towards the same lane which leads to the back of Jama Masjid. This time I went inside the small lanes of the Urdu Bazar in front of gate number 1 of Jama Masjid. Here I found many small shops selling different things, and in the middle of it all I found one shop little shop selling ittar, it was a small shop, it's entrance barely 4 feet in width but it stretched inward for about 9 or 10 feet. As you enter, you see the shopkeeper behind a low counter and on the wall behind him advertisements (as if from 1970's film poster makers) of different fragrances of ittar. This took up only about 2 feet in breadth on the wall, after which the shop had shelves of ittar in big beautifully carved glass bottles, some like decanters. The shelves had mirrors instead of wall paper. The effect is almost of something like a mini-palatial room of mirrors. On the counter before the shopkeeper were lots of small, beautifully decorated, crystal cut type bottles filled with brown, off-white, transparent and light yellow coloured

liquid. The dominant colours of the shop were pink and golden. The walls were pink and the bottles golden. The young man sitting behind the counter looked about 26 or 29 years old and another man who looked about 35 sat across from him. Both of them looked like they belong to an average middle class family of Delhi, wearing regular jeans and full shirt and sleeveless sweaters, as it is the beginning of winters in Delhi.

I was not quite sure on how to approach them? I'm not a buyer and I could not pretend to be one, as I would have to come here and meet them repeatedly. But I wanted that he should feel comfortable with me, I was hesitant to talk to him at first. As soon as I came near the shop, he greeted me and asked what I wanted. So I introduced myself as a student and that I am doing a research on ittar making traditions and families. At first he couldn't understand this. He did not understand why I was doing research on this subject? It was a tough question to answer, and the dilemma I faced was that if I say something which he didn't like then he won't be co-operative. But still I had to try and explain so I tried.

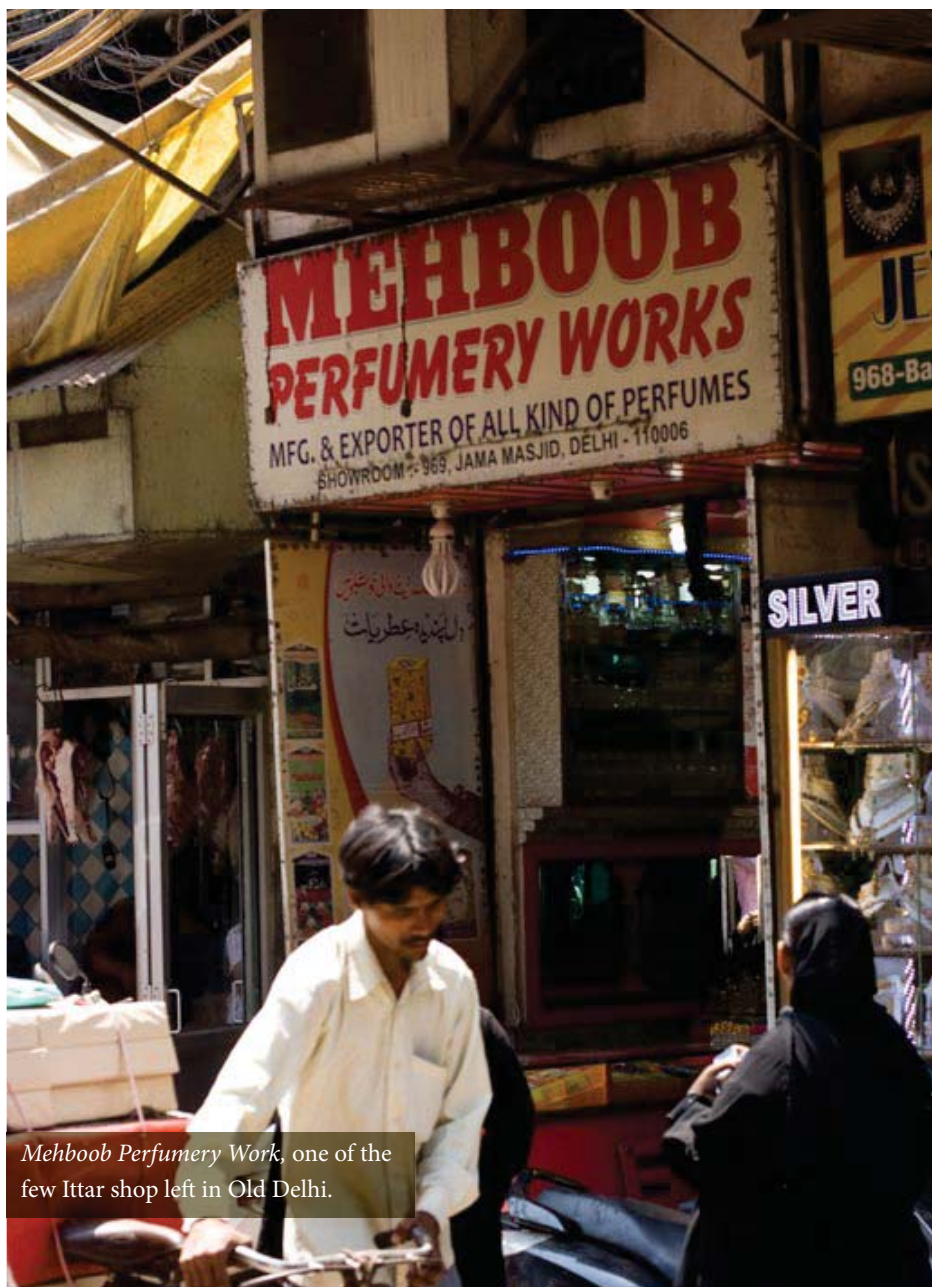
I knew that talking in technical terms won't help. So I had to bring the discussion and idea down to the common ground - about the ittar. I told him that at IIT we are trying to research the techniques used in the making of ittar, the use of which has come to be a tradition in India. And that as it's part of our history and tradition we should document it, understand it and spread awareness about it as it is also a fading tradition. This caught his attention and he started to discuss it in more detail.

He introduced himself as Mohammad Abid Ali, the owner of the shop. Abid seemed to be a very serious and no-nonsense kind of man, no extra conversation, only work, with very clear idea about the work he does. Or maybe he was just pretending to be so serious with me to give me an idea that he will not entertain idle chit chat for long.

The first thing he told me was to stop thinking of it as a dying tradition. He said it's a tradition that will continue far into the future and that though it was forgotten by the masses for some time, it is catching up very well again with the demand for natural products going up.



Taheer, my informant in his Ittar shop,



Mehboob Perfumery Work, one of the few Ittar shop left in Old Delhi.

“With the idea of using “green products” or non chemical and non industrial products, especially among the rich. We supply to various countries and customers from all over the world come to buy our ittar. We export our products to various places in Middle East and Europe. Many people prefer ittar because of its natural base and prefer it over alcohol based perfumes.

There is market in India as well as. The base of the Ittar is natural oil (sandalwood oil), generally we use sandal oil as the base for all the fragrances in ittar. The reason for this is the natural tendency of sandal oil which does not over power other fragrances.”

How many types of fragrances do you have?

We have various fragrances, from spicy to musk to floral. We have Rose, Jasmin, Kewda, Saffron, Genda, Lily, Zafari, Ginger, Chameli, Gulmohar, Juhi etc.

What kind of fragrances are liked in European and the Middle Eastern countries?

The Middle Eastern countries like more of Musky fragrance where as the Europeans like more of spicy.

Since how many generations has your family been in this business?

We are the 7th generation.

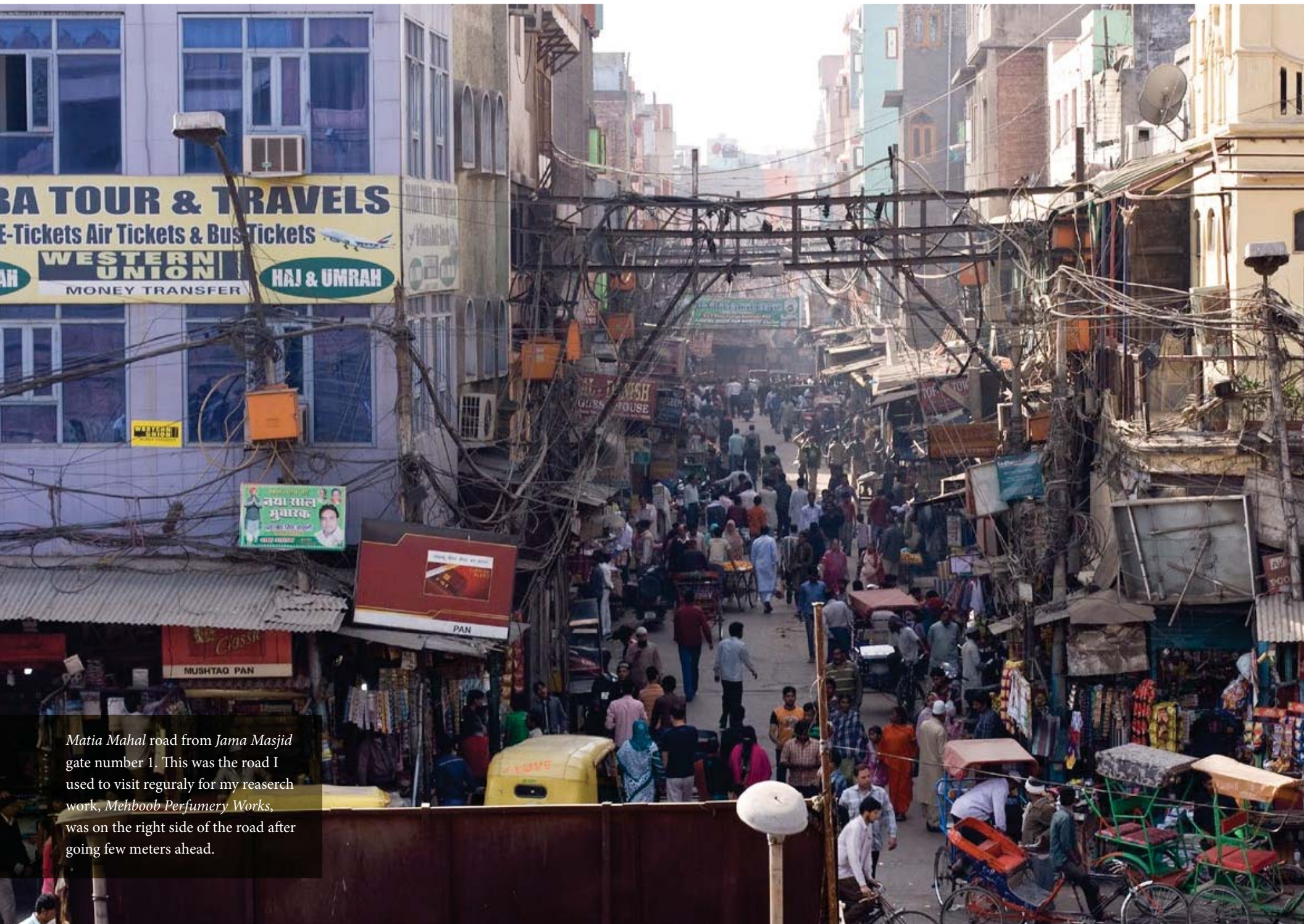
What is the measurement unit of Ittar? Has it changed during the generations?

What is the cost of 100 ml of Ittar?

He smiled and asked me, how do you measure milk and water? Its the same for Ittar. The measurement we use is in ‘milliliter’, earlier there might be some other kind of measuring system but we don’t know that. What we use is Milliliters, a 10 ml of a good grade of ittar will cost you about Rs. 600 now.

What defines the purity of Ittar?

Janab, what kind of question is this? He asked me if I eat vegetarian or non-vegetarian, I said non-vegetarian, he asked me do I know a dish called Mutton Korma, you can cook it with any given oil, normal spices you get in the market. And another way is to cook it in Desi Ghee, get good quality spices, and cook it well as it should be, the taste of the two will have difference, and that is how we differentiate the purity. The purity of Ittar are the ingredients we use to make it. Then he asked me from where I am and where I am staying, I told him I belong



Matia Mahal road from Jama Masjid gate number 1. This was the road I used to visit regularly for my research work, Mehboob Perfumery Works, was on the right side of the road after going few meters ahead.



to Bihar and these days I am staying in Mumbai, he said I have a shop in Md. Ali road (In Mumbai) also, but if you come there with all these questions and for research, I won't be able to give you time, here we have time so I can talk to you.

Do you make them or just sell them?

We manufacture it as well as sell it and export and we are the 7th generation doing this, nowadays after the introduction of machines in this field we have a lab to manufacture it. Earlier we used to have big tubs with continuously boiling water and oil. It was tough to produce ittar in large quantities. Now it's easier.

How have machines helped your business?

With the introduction of machines the production has increased, we have gained more profit, earlier if we worked a whole day we won't be able to produce as much as machines can produce and due to this we are able to export it in large quantities.

Where all do you have labs?

He didn't give a clear answer to this question, he said, you can find labs in Andheri, Mumbai, and in Noida, U.P.

How do you differentiate between the various fragrances as you work with so many - it must be difficult to differentiate between them?

If you blindfold a chef and give him something to eat and ask him to identify what it is, of course he will be able to tell you. It's same with us, you pick any from my shop I can tell you which fragrance it is without looking at the name, just by fragrance.

He was still probably thinking that I am going to make profit of all these research I am doing, so he asked what he will get out of this interview. Then I told him about my background in Fine Arts from Jamia Millia Islamia University, after which I went to IIT Bombay for higher studies. I explained again that the research I am doing is totally academic, this will be submitted to the university for further references or studies and that no one is making profit out of this.

I also told him that I will be in need of photographs, he said that I can feel free to take photographs, but I didn't have the camera with me then. I thought that this would also give me another chance to meet him, I could feel from this interaction that he is not interested

in talking to me anymore, but he gave me all the information that I wanted, so I told him I'll be visiting him the next day again. He agreed to give me time, but next day I had some other work, so I didn't visit him.



An aerial photograph of a densely packed urban area in Delhi, India. The image shows a vast expanse of buildings, many of which are multi-story and appear to be in various states of repair or renovation. The colors of the buildings are varied, including shades of brown, grey, red, and blue. The buildings are closely packed together, with narrow streets visible between them. The overall impression is one of a highly populated and somewhat cluttered urban environment.

Shahjahanabad

walled city of Delhi, India, was founded by Mughal Emperor *Shah Jahan* in 1639. It remained the capital of the Mughals until the end of the Mughal dynasty. It was once filled with mansions of nobles and members of the royal court, along with elegant mosques and gardens. Today, despite having become extremely crowded and dilapidated, it still serves as the symbolic heart of metropolitan Delhi.



View of Old Delhi for one of the minaret of *Jama Masjid*



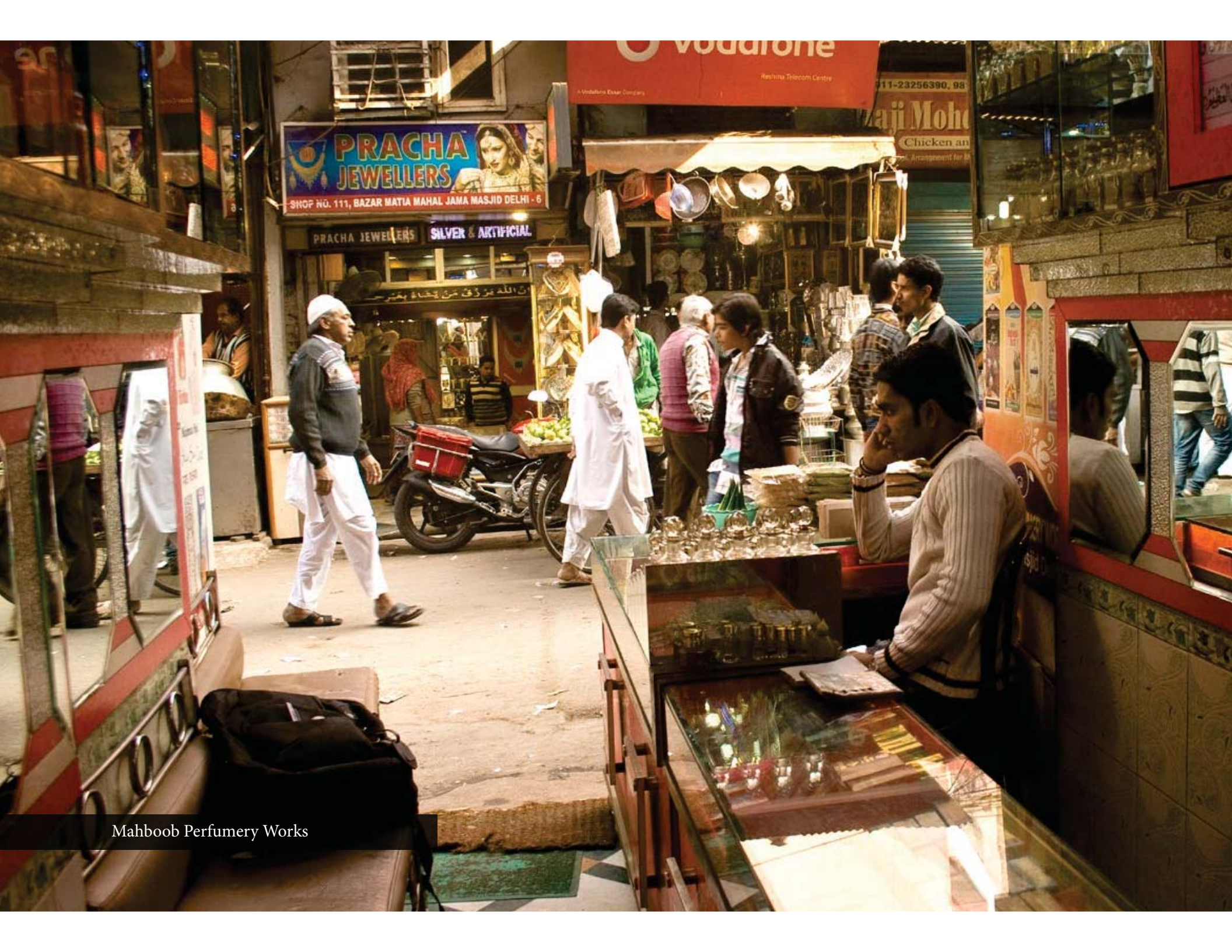
Day 04, Saturday, 10th of Dec 2011

11 o'clock - I reached the shop, which was open, but no one was there, the street was crowded as usual. The streets there are always crowded sometime less some time more. I waited for a while, but no one turned up, so I took a walk a little ahead of the shop. The street was getting narrower and busier, so I turned back. By this time the elder brother Muhammad Abid Ali was there, with two others, both of them look like they were in mid 40s, one in a shirt, sweater and jeans and the other one in a Pathan suit. All of them were chatting; I greeted them and sat on the bench for the clients. Abid turned towards me and said "We are having a small meeting, so you can come over after a while". Meanwhile there was another shopkeeper who wanted to see him. Generally all the shopkeepers know each other because they have unions and other business etc, they also respect others' meetings etc. So Abid told him also that he was having a meeting so he'll see him later.

Although I think they are more concerned about me as an intrusive

presence. It's also a risk to talk about business in front of some stranger. And if they don't have confidence in me, they won't let me know the details of the profession. And I think they always have a fear that I might take the knowledge from them and use it for my own benefit or share it with someone else. These things are always there. If they are talking about business, they are talking about money, and no one wants to discuss that in front of others. So I went out for a short walk, but even a casual stroll in this place is a struggle. At each step you have to navigate, I went outside the street to have a smoke and tea. I returned in about 20 minutes thinking the meeting might be over by now, but it was still going on, Abid Ali told me that he doesn't know how long the meeting will continue, so I should come over the next day. I left the place after greeting them Khuda Haafis.

Next day was Sunday and all the shops are closed, so my next visit has to be on Monday.



Mahboob Perfumery Works



Day 05, Monday, 12th of Dec 2011

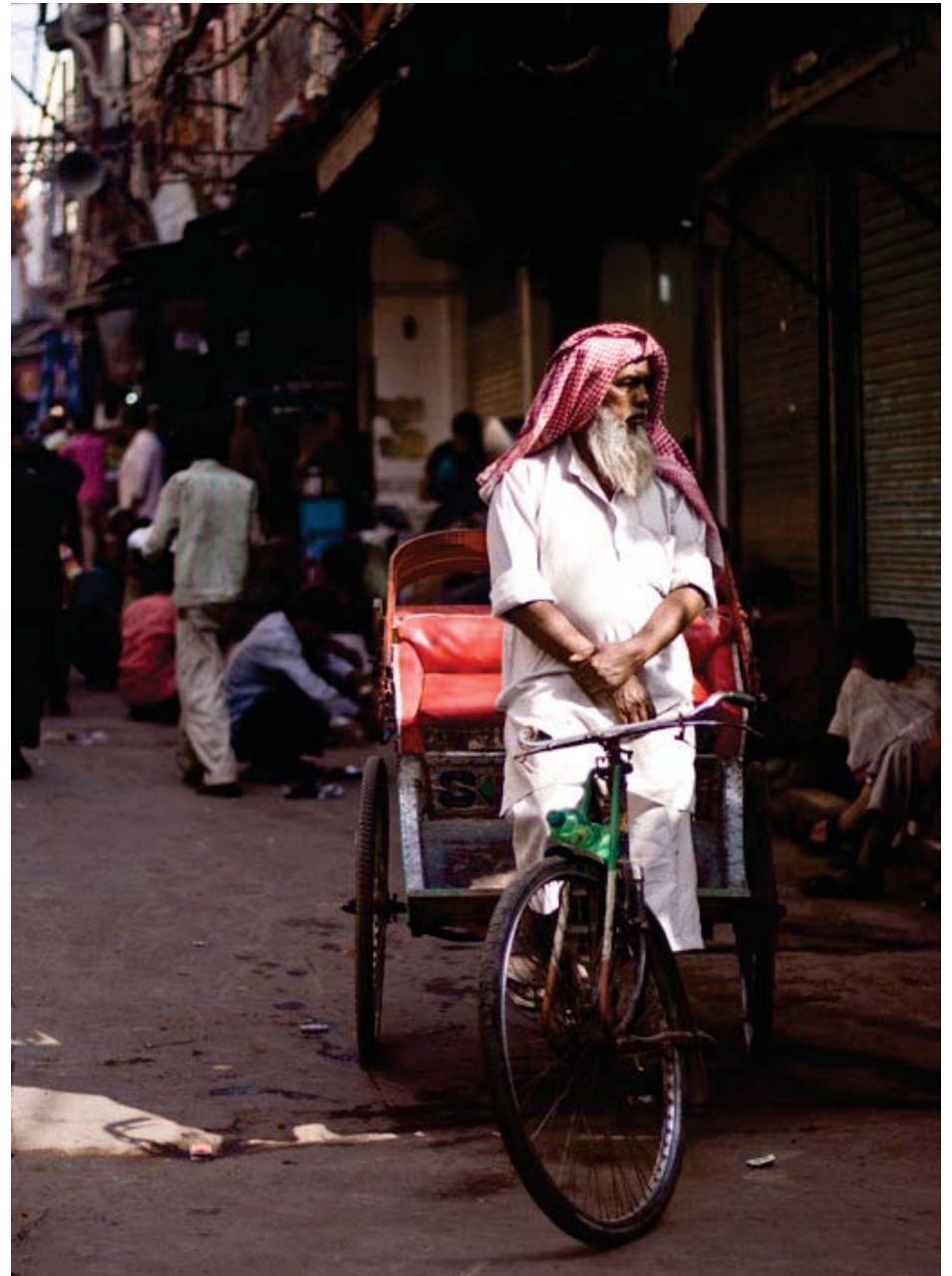
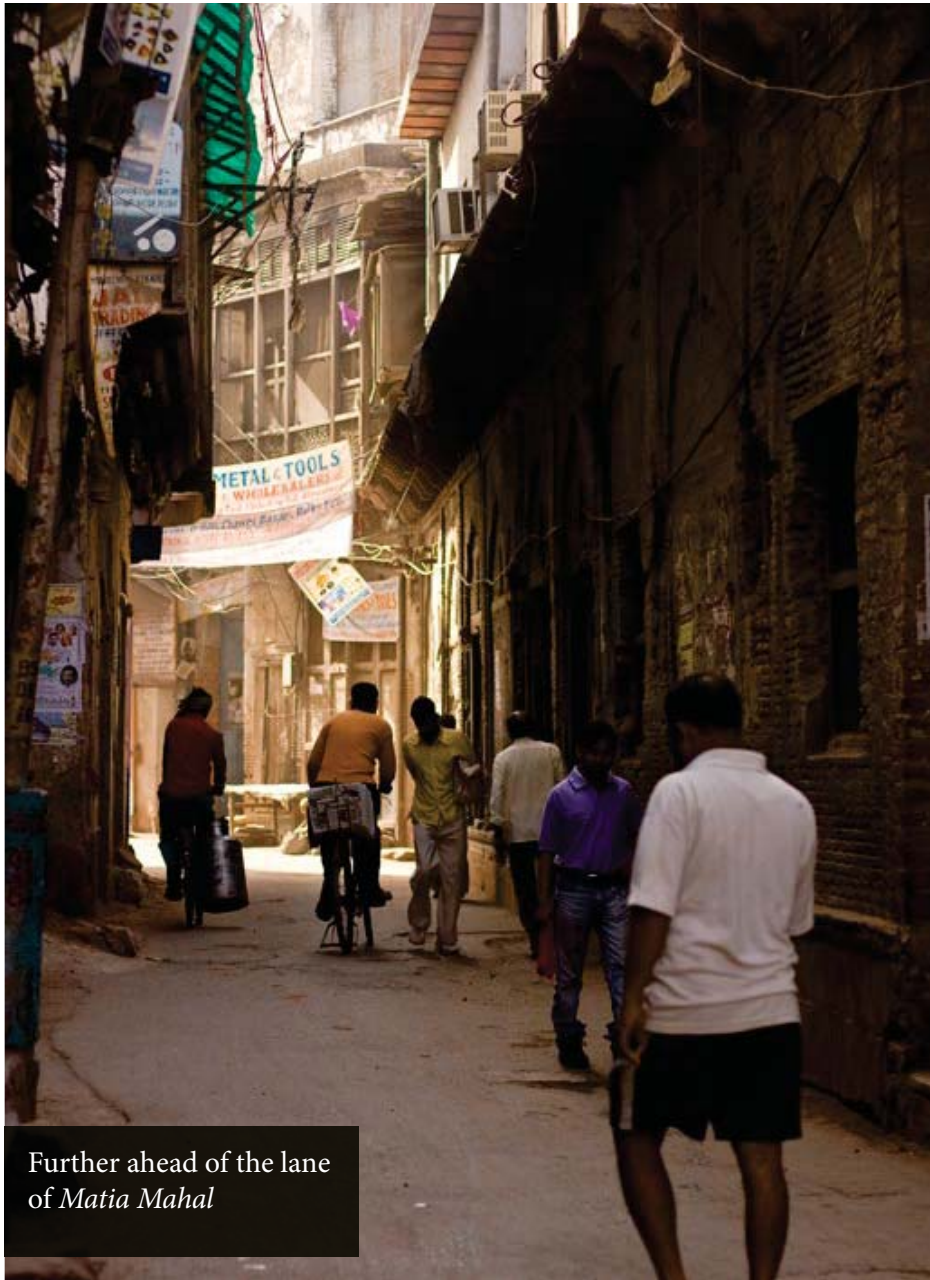
I generally prefer to reach there when the shops are open. Most of the shop owners have their house near by. My subject and I have not developed such a friendship or familiarity that I could secure an invitation to visit their home. It takes time for people to trust others in metropolitan cities of India, where people are always suspicious that others will take advantage of them.

By the time I reached Chandni Chowk at about 11:20 am the shops were open. As I was walked into the lane, on the left is one of the most famous restaurants in Delhi called Karim's. This is one of the most genuine Mughlai food you can get in Delhi. This restaurant has also been run by generations after generations. They claim that their forefathers were cooks in the Mughal courts. Karim's is very well known among locals as well as foreign tourists, so the lane is always crowded, you have to be in a queue to get a table, sometimes waiting for over 30 minutes. But this is in a very narrow lane that leads off to the left from the main lane. Next to it are other eateries, then some bakery shops, some general store, meat shop etc. I'm greeted by these

rich fragrances of food and the chatter of the crowds milling around me and the noise of the vehicles and rickshaws every day when I walk towards the shop, where I am again greeted by the sweet fragrances. But this time the shop was closed. I thought they might be coming late today, so I waited a while in front of the shop. Then I went further down the lane. This lane is also called Matia Mahal (meaning mud palace). There are a few more lanes attached to this lane on the left and the right. One of them leads to the actual Mahal (palace). I had time so I thought why not just look around. I asked people around for the way to the Mahal, it was the third lane going left from when you enter the lane. This is a much narrower lane, it would only allow one small car to enter, maybe one more motor bike also. The lane is filled with shops, but not the usual ones, these sell religious books, decorative religious texts framed, prayer beads, small carpets used for prayer, there were others who sell bigger carpets, decorative as well as plain, and among these a few hardware shops. Soon this lane took a right turn, and there were just houses there. It was much narrower, you can enter only on foot or on a bike. As this was a residential area, I didn't think its right to

go there with my camera.

On my way back to the shop there was a small lane on the left, I entered it and soon it opened up into a clearing with a small mosque type structure. It was like the usual features of an Islamic architecture. I didn't give much time to it as I had to go back and I had been roaming about for over 20 mins. When I reached the ittar shop it was still closed. I asked the other shopkeepers about Abid, and everyone said that by this time everyone in the lane opens their shops and if Abid hasn't then they might have gone somewhere and he won't open the shop today. I waited another 15 minutes, then left. It was already 12:10 pm.



Further ahead of the lane
of *Matia Mahal*

Day 06, Tuesday, 13th of Dec 2011

I reached Mahboob Perfumery Works at 11 am. I met the younger brother, Taheer. He looks after the shop too. His mother was also there for a while. It's a small place and I didn't have much space to enter, so I stayed out. In the meanwhile there was another kid, cleaning the shop. I asked Taheer who this boy was. He looked healthy and not like a local labourer. He was dressed up like a regular kid with clean clothes, but he was cleaning the shop. Taheer informed me that this was Osama, Taheer's cousin, he woke up late for his school and the attendant of the shop was on leave, so as a punishment he was to clean the shop, he studies in sixth standard. Taheer's mother was talking to them. Osama was cleaning the shop and I was standing outside observing everything. Taheer's mother left the place after a while, his house is near the shop, Osama also hung around for a while and then left the shop. I came to know about Osama during this time when he finished his work and was sitting next to me.

When he left, I started chatting with

Taheer, my informant.

Which is the period of maximum sale?

It is during Muharram, sale during winter is not not so great. Only the regular consumer come.

Which fragrance is used in which season and why?

Khus is used in summers and Henna in winter, Rose is throughout the year.

Isn't Henna supposed to have a cooling attribute?

Yes, but when it is heated the 'Taaseer' (essence/quality) of Henna becomes warm.

If Europeans like spicy fragrance and Middle-Easterns like musky what do Indians like?

Indians like more of floral fragrance. All the elderly people like the "Desi" ittar, like Rose, Henna, Khus, Mogra, Chameli, and the youth like the fragrances similar to regular branded perfumes like CK, Hugo Boss, etc. We make those kinds of fragrance by mixing various ittar.

Meanwhile a young customer comes to the shop to buy some ittar, both of them know each other, it seems he is a

regular customer. He asked for an ittar called Deep Red and he wanted another one, whose name he had forgotten, he referred to it as the Blue-wala - it was a blue coloured ittar. He took those in very small quantity like 3 ml for Rs. 30-50. Both the ittar are made by mixing various other ittars. I continued to sit in the shop for a while. I was just observing the crowd outside the shop. It feels like the shop is on the road, there is no difference/distance between the two. This kind of setting can be seen in all the old markets of Delhi. Then an old man came to buy ittar. He was asking questions about various things. I got busy checking out the unique names of the ittars. This old man had already decided what he wanted to buy, but still he wanted to try some other fragrances also. He tested a few and took one in 3 ml bottle for Rs. 30.

The testing of ittar is similar to the one used for perfumes. Ittar is oil based and the lid of the glass bottle that holds it has an inward conical shape to lock the lid. When someone wants to test it, you just need to open the lid and rub the innermost part of the cork shaped lid on the skin or clothes of the buyer. But to truly get the fragrance the buyer has

to rub it in and then smell it. Rubbing scatters the fragrance and then you get the actual aroma of it. If you have tested four fragrances its better don't go for further testing because it's of no use, our nose can't differentiate so many fragrances, all of them will smell the same after a while.

I wanted to know how to differentiate between the same fragrance, but of different quality. I tested two Rose ittars and two Khus, and the differences were clear. The stronger the fragrance is and the longer it lasts is key to identifying the quality. It's the quality of ingredients used that makes the difference, the process is same. I also tried the Deep Red fragrance. It was nice and different.

Day 07, Friday, 16th of Dec 2011

Reached the shop at 12 pm. It's a Friday – it's called Jumma in the Islamic calendar, they offer special prayers on this day. The roads were blocked by the police, no vehicles can enter the Jama Masjid's gate number one, but its open for people to walk through, it was like a river of people flowing towards Jama Masjid, a continuous flow, people are running as the prayer is about to start and I was the only one who was going the opposite way, navigating my way towards the shop.

My subject Taheer left the shop as soon as I reached there, he was not going to Jama Masjid, he left for his house for namaz leaving his shop helper (attendant) Sohail to look after the shop. I sat there too looking, observing the crowd running towards the Jama Masjid. The narrow lane is filled with people. Today I thought I'll take few pictures of the area and shop. Sohail sat next to me complaining that his prayer time will be missed because Taheer has gone. He got up, picked a small bottle of ittar from the display, took a little in his hand and

rubbed it all over his body and asked me "how does it smell?" it was a different kind of fragrance, I had never smelled it ever before, I asked him what is it, he said its "White Oud" but I couldn't understand it. Then another young man about Sohail's age, who seemed to be a helper in another shop, came and started chatting with Sohail. Then another man came asking for Taheer, as he wasn't there he said he'll come later. I was waiting for Taheer, after twenty minutes he came, prayer time was over by then, again the whole lane was filled with people. Taheer went behind the counter and sat, I informed him that there was a guy looking for him and he'll be back after a while. As I wasn't clear about the name of the ittar which the shop helper was wearing, I asked Taheer, he said its White Oud, "Oud" is a name of a plant, and they use it to make Ittar, so they named it "White Oud".

I asked him, how do you name the Ittars?

He said the way people name their kids, the pure ones which doesn't have any kind of mixture are named after the their original names like rose, chameli, heena etc., where as the mixed ones are named after the kind of smell they resemble to

the modern perfumes or something or the other that inspires the name.

I asked him for permission to take pictures of his shop, he agreed. I wanted to take pictures of the street also, the best angle I thought would be from the top as I can take the whole busy street. I asked my subject about using someone's roof top to shoot, he said there are houses and it won't be a good idea to do that, it would be seen as an intrusion by the families. So I dropped the plan. I sat for a while and asked him about extending and expanding the business. The new malls would be a good option, outlets like FabIndia sell small quantity in Rs.250 and Rs.500 for 3 ml and 6 ml, and you are one of the manufacturers, you can have a lot of profit.

He didn't seem interested, and he replied that they are two brothers - his elder brother looks after the one in Mumbai and he look after this shop, there is no one else now to look after another one.

Taheer then got busy on some call on his cell phone. There is no landline there as in other wholesale shops of Chawri Bazar and Chandni Chowk. Taheer uses a local made or china made mobile

phone. I went out to shoot the street and the area around it. I was standing opposite to the shop and trying to get a shot of shop through the crowd, when an old man came to the shop. Taheer waved to me to come over. I thought he might be calling me for something, or I might have done something wrong or it's not allowed to take pictures. As I reached the shop Taheer was leaving and he also asked me to leave. I didn't understand why he doesn't want me to meet his father. Maybe his father's very strict; he certainly looks like he is. I wanted to stay and talk to his father but as he wasn't comfortable with that, I dropped the idea for then. I left the place and started walking towards the metro through Chawri Bazar, I thought I should go back and talk to his father, but I thought it might strain my relationship with my subject.



Various Ittar packed in small quantities for people who are already familiar with the fragrance.





Break: Saturday, 17th of Dec 2011

I was running high fever and it was very cold. I had fever till 20th December and decided to stay home and rest.

Day 08, Wednesday, 21st of Dec 2011

I reached the shop at 12 pm. There were 6 or 7 foreigners in the shop they were wearing jeans, sweaters, shirts, sports shoes and sun glasses. The whole shop was full and there was no place to sit. I said hello to Taheer and kept my bag beneath the seating inside the shop as it was too heavy with my laptop as well as camera. The foreigners were from the middle-east. They were talking in Arabic and asking a lot of questions about the various fragrances in the shop. As they decided to buy the fragrances, they would keep them separately. I kept standing outside the shop and listening to them, I couldn't hear those who were inside the shop, there was a lot of noise outside, on the road, traffic, people, bikes, goods carriers, rickshaws, walkers, cycles, etc. Some time they come so close to me that I had to move – adjust

myself closer to the customer's bench in the shop. All of them were trying different types of ittars, talking a lot to each other and getting it packed in 12 ml bottles. The attendant Sohail was busy packing and labeling them, after half an hour or so two more people of the same group joined, they had gone to some other shop to buy something else. All of them stayed there for a while and packed all the stuff they bought and left the place.

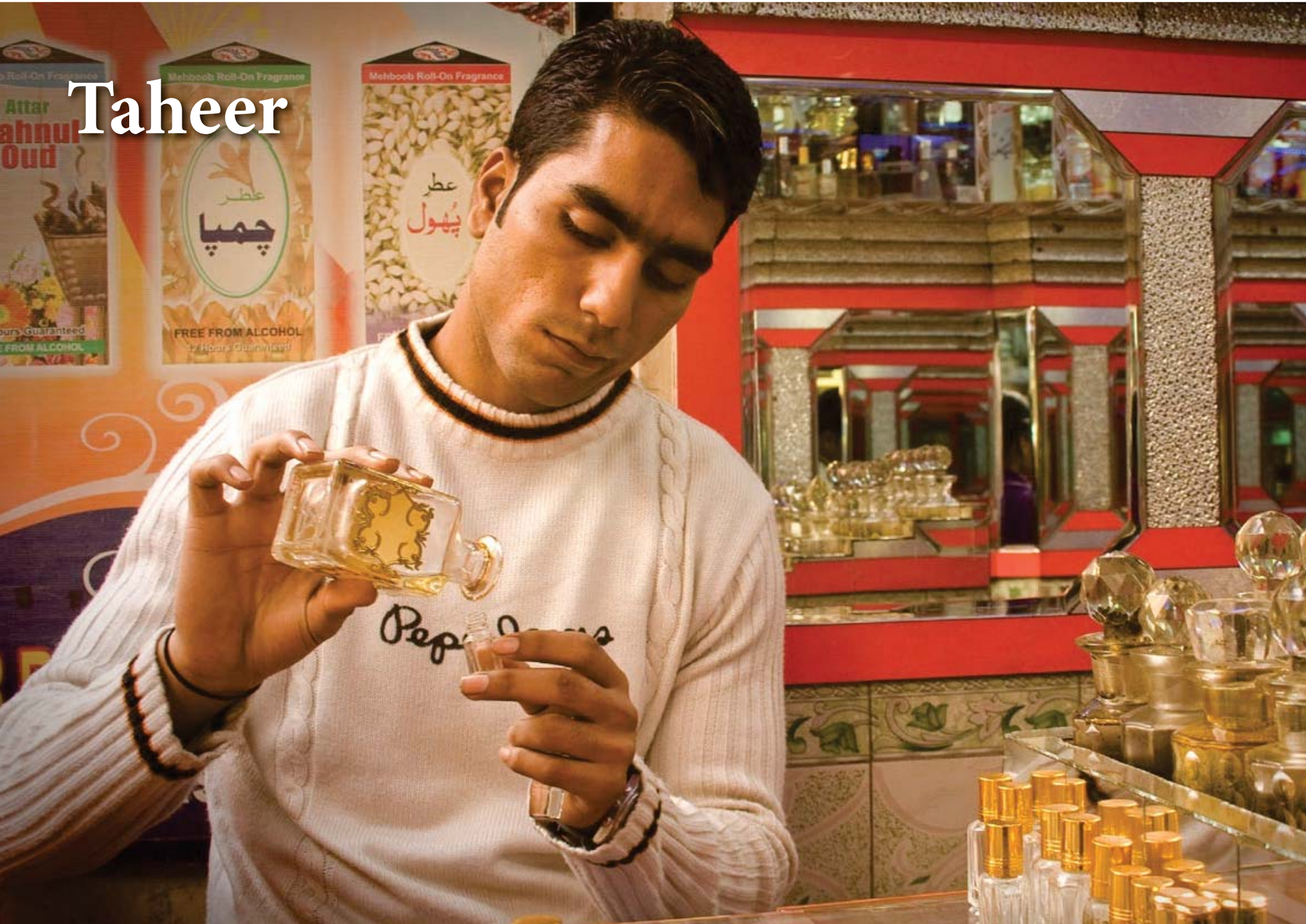
I asked Taheer when they had arrived, he said about 11:30 am. They had stayed there for more than an hour. I asked him from where they were? He said somewhere from the middle-east. He said he's hardly interested in where they are from. Most of them are from Dubai, people come from there to India and buy ittar. November, December, January and February, the weather for the foreigners is just right, they love to travel, walk and buy stuff, and business is good during those days.

Few local people also came after these customers had left. They bought one or two bottle of 3 ml Musk and a blue coloured Ittar. They called it blue coloured - it didn't have a name. I also

tried the same - it was very strong and had a mixed fragrance. Taheer told me that it is liked by most youth. Today's youth like strong and mixed fragrance not like the elderly people who still prefer the original basic fragrance. He asked me if my project is over or not, and what more I need for it. I told him that I need to make a small film about this, take his interview and maybe his family as well, and if possible the lab too. He was quiet for a while then said, you can take picture of me and shop, but no one will allow you to shoot video of the family. You can take address of my brother's shop in Mumbai - if he allows you to visit the lab then you can shoot pictures there.

I asked him about his brother Abid. If he was still in Delhi or had gone back to Mumbai. I hadn't seen him in a long time. He said he was here but busy with his work, he sits in the shop after 8 pm. I told him that I'll try to be at the shop at that time and left the place. I didn't stay long as he starts feeling like I am wasting his time and business.

Taheer





Day 09, Saturday, 24th of Dec 2011

Reached Mehboobs Perfumery at 12 pm, my subject's father is there. As are many new buyers, wearing regular jeans, shirt and sweater. As I went near the shop I saw all of them are foreigners, there are four of them. Again I don't want to interrupt the sale so I stood outside the shop watching them. They are all from some Arab country, they bought a lot of ittar and other powders like, henna, ubtans etc. each one of them got a big plastic bag filled with these. Meanwhile Osama (my subject's cousin) came and was standing next to me with a big round plate covered with a colourful cloth. He recognises me, we exchanged greetings and I asked him that since how long they are here, he said since 11 am. I asked him what is in the plate, he said it's Taheer's father's food, who had not had breakfast. The food is getting cold and these people were not finished buying. Osama and I waited another 15 minutes while the customers finished buying. When they left I greeted Taheer's father and sat on one side of the bench. Osama kept the food on the inside table.

This was my first meeting with my subject's father, I was interested in knowing about his ideas and experiences of being an ittar manufacturer and trader. He might be able to add a lot to my knowledge. But he is least interested in it. I was confused how to start the conversation with him again. I told him about my background and why I am here. Unable to understand the new age kinds of education and research – perhaps since he has been confined within his life as an ittar maker and seller – he dismisses my effort to explain my research efforts so far of speaking with Abid and Taheer.

Therefore I abandon any more attempts to explain it to him and started asking him about the Rose ittar.

As he doesn't understand what kind of study I am doing and why, for him I am a regular buyer. So he talks to me likewise. And I decide to deal with him the same way.

I asked him for five bottle of Rose in 3 ml. he said Rs. 40 each, I told him that Taheer told me it is for Rs. 30. We had a little discussion on it. He talks very little - it feels like he has to make a huge effort to speak at all. He calls the attendant

for taking out the bottles, the rollers to put on top of the bottle, the cover and the pouch. He started pouring in bottles slowly one by one, then I started asking him questions. I felt now I have bought something from him now I can talk a little about him and his profession.

I asked him from where he belongs?

Kannauj, most of the people in this profession are from Kannauj.

What is the difference between how things were in this profession earlier and now?

There are a lot of differences, like:

Usage

Sale

Economy

Importance

In terms of usage earlier it was only the rich class like the Nizaams, Nawabs etc. could afford ittars, now every family can.

The youth of my era were not interested in using ittar, they used it only at weddings or some special functions or festivals.

Now everyone uses it like the regular perfume or deodorant.

The Nizaams or the Nawabs will have a set of Ittars in a wooden box, morning one fragrance, afternoon one and evening

another and at night something else. There were no mixed Ittars or fragrances. Only pure fragrances like, henna, mogra, chameli, musk, rose etc. It's the new generation which need different fragrances and we are compelled to mix and create new fragrances.

Earlier the ittar were used not only in wearing but also in edibles, like tobacco, pan and some sweets etc.

Earlier our clients were less now we have variety of clients, from young to elderly, we also have a lab where we create new fragrances. That is due to the advancement in technology. Economically of course we have grown but everything else has also.

The importance of Ittar has gone down because of its regular usages, earlier it was used only in some festival, wedding or some function, now everyone usages regularly every day. In that sense it has gone down.

Is there any change in your business in last twenty years?

Yes, there has been. Twenty year ago we didn't have so many fragrances, only the regular ones were used, now we have I

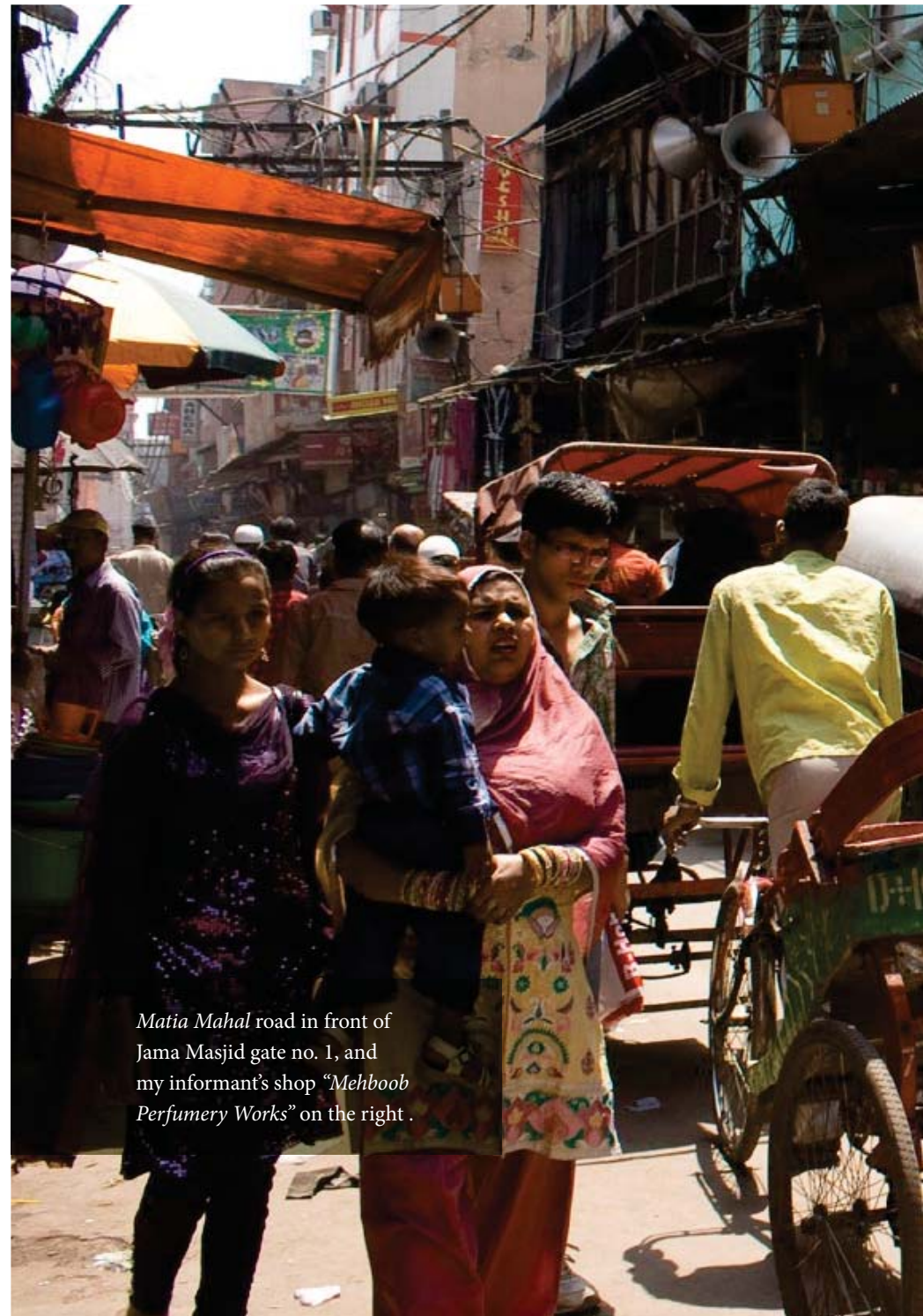
don't know how many.

In those days I was the only in the family managing the business, my kids were too young to handle, and due to that I also didn't experiment, now these people are mature enough to handle this, so I don't care. I just visit some day if I am getting bored at home or want to see how the business in going etc.

Now my breakfast is getting cold, if you are done, could I eat my meal?

I have been observing that my subject's father is not much interested in talking to me. He sees me as a client who is going to buy ittar and just a little more interested in knowing about the tradition.

The way he said "are you done" that indicates that he doesn't want any further conversation with me. So I told him that I'll visit some other day. I greeted him and left the place.



Matia Mahal road in front of Jama Masjid gate no. 1, and my informant's shop "Mehboob Perfumery Works" on the right .





Day 10, Monday, 26th of Dec 2011

One of my friends got interested in my project and was keen on visiting the place I was frequenting. This also solved a particular problem I had of wanting to document the process of a buyer's visit. I could not have disturbed their actual clients, who may not have liked the unnecessary attention or being photographed by a stranger.

So my friend Susan and I reached the shop by 11:30 am, when the shop had been readied to receive its first customers. My subject and his attendant were sitting and with them there was another man next to the counter, he didn't look like a client, the way they were chatting with each other, they seemed more familiar and friendly. As we approached the shop the man left him, he was the owner of a shop nearby.

I greeted my subject and introduced him to Susan, explaining that she was interested in buying some ittar. I asked him to show her the ones which I liked a lot, then I asked for his permission to document this process also. He agreed. After smelling a few, when she was

not able to differentiate between the different fragrances, he gave her a small bottle filled with coffee beans to smell. The smell of the coffee beans refreshes your sense of smell allowing you to note stronger fragrances of the flowers etc. Susan bought a few fragrances. After buying ittar she was also eager to know more about the ittar makers, the unique imprint it has on their culture and way of life and the role women in their families have in the trade.

Do women of the family also participate in any aspect of this work?

His reaction was quick." Women don't interfere in business. They don't know anything about business. They stay at home, they don't know about market."

Is there a special place of ittar in your culture and festivals and celebrations?

Do you gift ittar at weddings, and what is the significance of it in your family and community?

Yes, we give ittar to each other during weddings. Everyone uses Ittar during festivals and celebrations especially wedding. So It makes a good gift. And on the wedding night, the groom's room is filled with the fragrance of henna (mehdi), it's supposed to be joyful.

1) As Ittars are oil based, they can't be sprayed, so the lid of the bottle is made in such a way that it goes deeper into the bottle and by tilting the bottle Ittar gets on the lid and can be used for smelling.

2) Ittar is spread over the skin or cloth, its is so concentrated that it can't be smelled directly.



How many variety of Ittar do you have here?

We have around 1200 variety and we keep experimenting with different fragrances to create more.

Do women also suggest or say what you should produce or which fragrances you should mix or about the trend or anything about the business?

Women of the family sit at home and do household works, they don't know anything about the business or the trend and market, they don't interfere and they are not allowed to do so also.

How many traditional ittar-making families are there in India?

There might be 10 to 15 families who are genuine, and their forefathers also used to do this. Rest of them are fake.

What about the Ittarwalas in Nizamuddin?

All of them are traders; none of them belong to any traditional ittar making families.

Who are Traders?

Traders are those who buy ittar from the manufacturers and sell it. They don't manufacture it. There are many like that in Old Delhi and around.

3) He also gives coffee beans to smell so that you are able to feel other fragrances if you are willing to look for more.

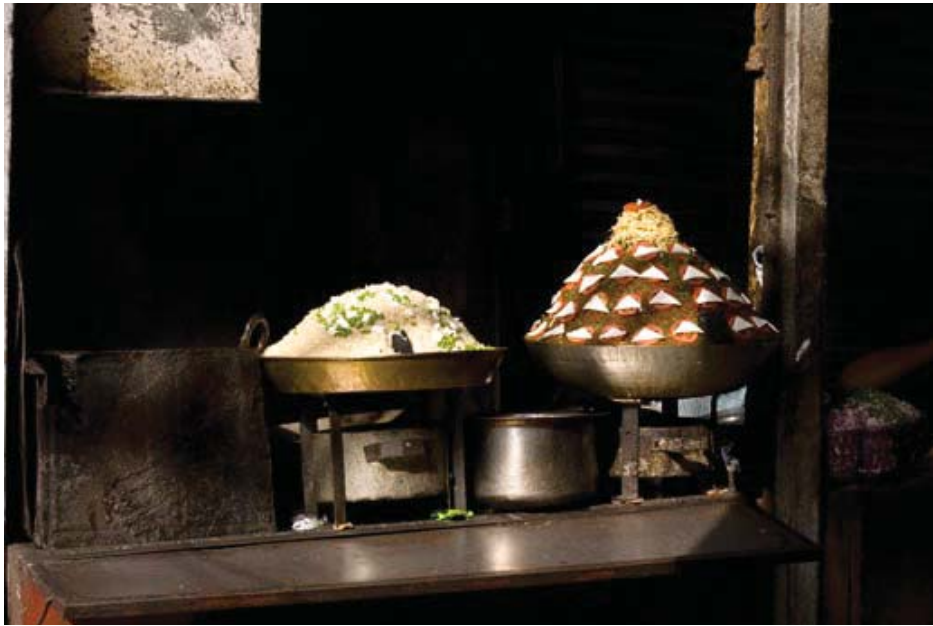
4) They have separate bottles of 3ml, 6ml, 12ml etc. for different types of clients, not everyone can afford good quality Ittar, and as it is concentrated, it also stays for long on the selves.

Meanwhile

Meanwhile are those days when I didn't visited the shop as I was more interested in looking places and things around. One of them is the **ParatheWali Gali**, is the name of a narrow street in the Chandni Chowk area of Delhi, India, noted for its series of shops selling paratha, a fried Indian bread, and now a popular culinary destination.











Rickshaw puller are one of the unique thing in Old Delhi, one can find it anywhere to go anywhere in side Old Delhi, roads are not so broad there so it becomes convenient for car owners to park it and move on these.



As this was my first ethnography research, there were many things came in my mind while doing this. I have interacted with people but not in such a way were I am asking someone everything about their life, family and business. Every time I'll do that, I'll keep myself in his shoes and think, which in a way changed my approach towards the whole thing, I was never willing to push my informant to know certain thing which he was not willing to tell.

In this fast paced world where everyone is interested in their own profit without the respect of others, nobody wants to share their trade secrets, in my case it was the ittar manufacturing lab, I never got the address nor motivation from my informant to visit the lab in Delhi as well as Mumbai. I could understand that so I never forced also. My informant's father was no more interested in coming to the shop, as his children were managing it very well and from their point of view, it was a good source of income and this is what they know the best. Expansion of business is not possible

for them right now because there is no extra trustworthy hand they have, so they are happy with what they are doing right now. Traveling for the job is also less or negligible in this case and there is a set business and regular clientele in that locality, and during the festive season the business is good as well as when tourism is high, like november to march, during this time lots of tourist visit Delhi as the weather is pleasant and its winter season. And Old Delhi is one of the most visited place in Delhi as it is also the city made by Shahjahan (Shahjahanabad).

Another analysis which came to me when I went to the place was the locality, the place has the majority of muslims living there, and few of them are the descendent of mughals, like the traditional chef of mughals Karim's, like that there are various families who are there since generations and generations, ittars as a fragrance is used a lot by muslim and its also a tradition coming from generations, and this kind of places facilitate and are open for traditional

Analysis

activities. Where as in this new era of malls and high class shopping areas these traditional things are not able to find a space. So the place (Old Delhi) makes it a perfect place for their business.

The relation between and son and father was little tricky to understand, my subject never felt very comfortable when his father was around, or when I and his father was around, his father was like a serious man also, due to this I always used to approach his father through him, and every time I was disappointed because my subject would never allow me to do so, for that I had to find another way, once I was visiting his shop as regular I used to but that day only his father was there, so that was a good opportunity for me, there I went to meet him like a curious client. And found that this was the only way to talk to him.

The tradition of ittar which I thought was dying is actually not true, as the idea of organic, non-chemical, etc. has come up in todays generation all





across the globe, this traditional ittar making has got the market, even the young generation who are aware of this tradition are willing to go for ittar, the higher class of the Islamic religion still associate ittar with rich and high class, so most of them go for it.





Conclusion

I went there with the notion that this tradition is not in used much, but when I met them the first thing they told me was to remove the idea, so as a researcher we shouldn't have a fixed mindset about the issue we are going to research. The more open the researcher is the better he can connect to the informant and his research.

It is also important to know the place around and a little history of it, which helps you to connect to the research with respect to the local area and surrounding. As in my case the equipment I was carrying which was a DSLR (Digital Single Lens Reflex) which is not a new thing for the people living in this area, as there are a lot of tourist keep visiting with filming and photographic gadgets. It was not an alien equipment for them, due to that people around were comfortable with it including my informant.

The whole idea of research of the community is very unique, the important thing is the community

should accept the research as a friend and not someone who wants to make profit out of the information he/she will collecting. To make that happen one must spend a lot of time to gain their confidence. The time I spend with them was actually less for doing visual ethnography.

The relation between the informant and the researcher should be based on trust, and to gain confidence of their family one should really understand their culture, tradition and the religion, in my case as I have been to Old Delhi many times before this research and I have also studied in Islamic university so a little is known to me about the islamic culture. So it was not so difficult for me to understand their culture and tradition.



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