



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

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Editor's Note

The mystic haunts

THE MYSTIC HAUNTS

When Feroze Shah Tughlak built his Kotla or fort in the 14th Century, he did not have to look far for a site. The ruins of an earlier citadel were already there and these belonged to the time of the slave sultans. Some aver that they were actually a part of the ancient Indraprastha. Such conjectures are natural in a city like Delhi where there are several layers of habitation, for isn't the city older than Rome and even the Ilium of the Trojans, from where Aeneas Queen escaped to establish another city state after the tragic affair with Dido? For that matter even the Red Fort occupies the site of an old Afghan fort. And to go back further, the fortification of Alauddin Khilji extended right up to the place where now stands the Khooni Darwaza. Feroze Shah's Kotla was an excellent specimen of Tughlak architecture for he was a builder of magnificent monuments, like Shah Jahan in a later age. But when the Sayyids came to power, they shifted their attention to another part of the city which included Mubarakpur, the present Ramakrishnapuram and Lodi Gardens area. The Lodhis, of course did not lay the gardens now known after them because of the profusion of Lodhi monuments there. These gardens were laid in their present form in the early 1930s and known after Lady Willingdon, the vicereine. When the Moghuls took over, Kotla was a forsaken building and the haunt of sufis and mast kalandars. The latter were a sect of derveshes who wore camel skin shirts or just wrapped themselves up in blankets. They were generally big, sturdy men, neglectful of their hygiene, who went about beating themselves with iron chains or brandishing huge steel fire-tongs. Ahmed Ali, the author of *Twilight in Delhi*, talks of a mast kalandar who hadn't brushed his teeth for years. He, like the others of his tribe, came to the Jama Masjid area from the Kotla, especially during the time of the various Urs. Thursday is the day Now, you don't find mast kalandars in the Kotla, but the sufis are still there. Go on a Thursday and you will find them in full sway. People do not flock to see them but seek the intervention of jinns in their daily lives. The jinns have been associated with the Kotla ever since it became a discarded citadel. It is believed that they were formed from fire, and not earth like man, during the time of Creation. There are two kinds of jinns; the Tairan and the Haiwan. While the former are blessed beings who help mankind and even take wives, the latter are destructive and hostile in their dealings because of their baser instincts. William Dalrymple mentions Djinns in his famous book on Delhi. They are also found in Mehrauli around the Makan-e-Khizr. Hazrat Khizr is believed to be the grandson of Adam, the first man, who keeps travelling around the world. His journey will terminate only when the world ends. By the way jinns are fond of sweets and pretty women. They are dressed in white and, being invisible, cast no shadow.

Interestingly, people of all faiths throng the Kotla to seek the blessings of the jinns. So there is a regular mela there on Thursdays.

SOURCE
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Should you have any comments or suggestions, you could reach us at

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