

## The history and practice of naming streets in Delhi

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### Introduction: History of Streets

The word 'Street' was borrowed from Latin language. The Roman strata or paved roads were taken up to drive the word street. The word street helps us to recognise the roman roads which were straight as an arrow, connecting the strategic positions in the region.

The early forms of street transport were horses or even humans carrying goods over tracks. The first improved trails would have been at mountain passes and through swamps. As trade increased, the tracks were often flattened or widened to accommodate human and animal traffic, Some of these soil tracks were developed into broad networks, allowing communities, trade and governance over wide areas.

The junction of these dirt tracks was thus named by human communities for the sake of remembrance or as a landmark. Street paving has been found from the first human settlements around 4000 BC. They were located in the cities of Indus Valley Civilization on the Indian Subcontinent, such as Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.

### History of Street Names in Delhi

The giving of street names seems to depend on two considerations-

- Recognition that street is an entity possessing a unique importance in terms of trade, commerce, transport, connectivity etc. and therefore requiring to be named for differentiation and remembrance.
- A realization that the street is one way or other interesting or significant and so needs to be marked out or named.

From a European viewpoint, such a system was essential to affect many activities such as levying assessments and taxes, controlling fires and counting the population as well as general surveillance of the city's inhabitants. Yet naming a street is a complex process involving interplay of several factors. Certain themes tend to dominate nomenclature of streets such as geography, races, culture and beliefs, colonial influence, history etc. Orally transmitted names for streets may date thousands of years back. In all the years from then till now, the reasons for naming streets, the naming processes, the purpose of naming streets and the context in

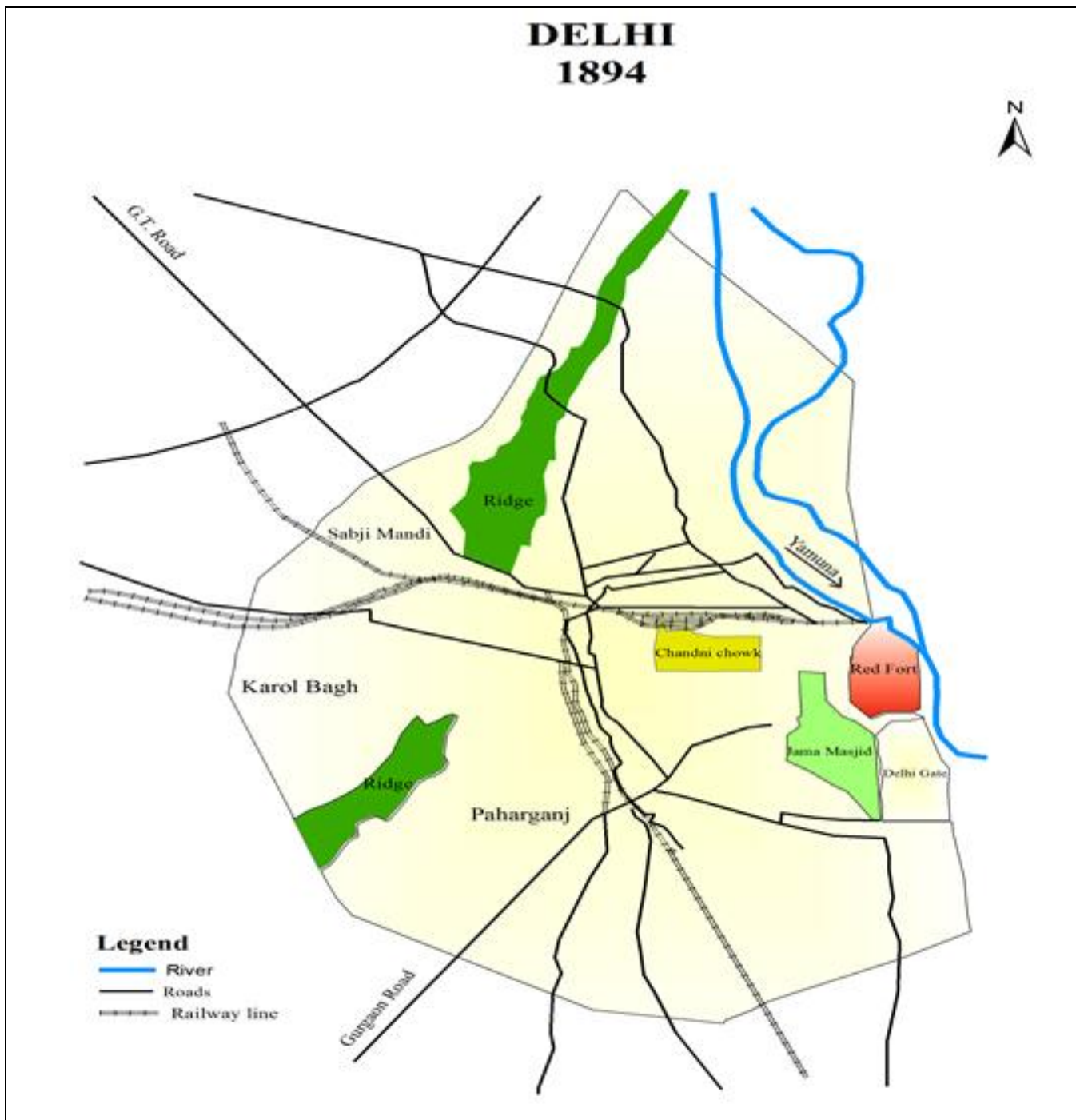
which naming streets took place have changed considerably. Delhi, India's capital is believed to be one of the oldest cities of the world. From Indraprastha to New Delhi, it had been a long journey. As popularly believed, Delhi has been the site for seven historic cities- Lalkot, Siri, Tughlaqabad, Jahan Panah, Ferozabad, Purana Quila and Shahajahanabad. Shahajahanabad remains a living city till present housing about half a million people.

#### 2.5.1 Street names of Shahajahanabad: Mughal Capital

The seventh city of Delhi, Shahajahanabad was built in 1638 on the banks of river Yamuna. The two major streets of Shahajahanabad were Chandni Chowk and Faiz Bazaar. Chandni Chowk, or the moonlight square was established in 1650 CE. The market was shaped as a square and given elegance by the presence of pool in the centre of the complex. The pool shimmered in the moonlight, a feature which was perhaps responsible for its name.

Shops were originally built in a half moon shaped pattern, which is now lost. The market was famous for its silver merchants, which have also contributed to the name as silver is referred to as *Chandi* in hindi, a slight variation of which forms Chandni. The pool in the chowk was replaced by clock tower (Ghantaghar) in 1950s. Chandni Chowk, named in 17<sup>th</sup> century, remains as one of the oldest street names of Delhi which is still used today.

Faiz Bazaar, now called Daryaganj was an important commercial place during Mughal era. Faiz is an Arabic name, derived from word 'Faza' which means successful. It was a posh and vibrant market. It was called as Faiz Bazaar until partition of India in 1947, when present traders moved into the area. Afterwards, it was renamed to Daryaganj which literally means "River trading Warehouse". The "darya" refers to the river Yamuna which was just outside the walled city. It had the original cantonment of Delhi till 1803. As the new capital New Delhi was built after 1911, Daryaganj along with Paharganj were only two buffer areas between the new city and the older city. Now called, New Daryaganj it continues to be commercial hub of Old Delhi. It is famous for its Book Market. The market established here around 1964 and today stretches for almost 2 kilometres.



Source: Prepared by Researcher

Fig 1: Walled city of Shahajahanabad

**Street names of Imperial city: New Delhi**

King George V, emperor of the British Empire proclaimed his decision to move the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1911, at Delhi Durbar. The British were the descendants of power after Mughals and their new capital was envisioned to express the power of the *Raj*. Edwin Lutyens, the architect was handed over the task to build the city of his dreams, “Anglo-Indian Rome” which would reflect the glory of vast empire.

The Lutyens plan reflects geometric symmetry which is visible through sequences of triangles and hexagons. Besides

the major pathway, there are wide avenues. The original design of the street network was capable of accommodating 6000 vehicles. However these avenues had the potential of increasing their carriageway. This is the reason why street layout has survived till today.

The need for levying taxes and general surveillance of population during British times were reasons to formalize the Street names of New Delhi. In 1911, Delhi Municipal Council was formed which was responsible for naming of streets. The street names which were planned and established under Lutyens Delhi is as follows-

**Table 1:** Street established under Lutyens Delhi Plan

Street name	Type	Tehsil
Queensway	Arterial	Connaught place and Parliament street tehsil
Kingsway	Arterial	Connaught place and Parliament street tehsil
Irwin Road	Sub Arterial	Connaught place tehsil
Curzon Road	Sub Arterial	Connaught place tehsil
Kitchener Road	Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
Willing don Cres	Sub Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
Hardinge Avenue	Arterial	Connaught place tehsil
Reading Road	Sub Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
Roberts Road	Sub Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
Baird Road	Sub Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
Havelock road	Sub Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
Albuquerque Road	Sub Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
Dalhousie Road	Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
Race Course road	Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
Wellesley Road	Arterial	Connaught place tehsil
Canning Road	Sub Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
Hailey road	Sub Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
Park street	Sub Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
Church road	Sub Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
South Avenue	Sub Arterial	Parliament street tehsil
North Avenue	Sub Arterial	Parliament street tehsil

*Source:* Lutyens Delhi plan, School of Architecture and Planning

The centre of Connaught place was central vista. The Duke of Connaught came back to Delhi in 1921. In his speeches he mentioned about his fondness for Delhi. As he was the uncle of British monarch, the government had to prove their affection for him. They named shopping plaza at D- Circus as Connaught place. Sometimes landmarks in the form of statues, parks, buildings etc. were incorporated in the nodes formed by the streets which enhanced the quality of the streets and landmark identification helped to erase confusion. Some of the streets were named after these landmarks.

**Street names of Modern Delhi: Master Plan 1961**

In 1947, after the partition and Independence of India, Delhi

witnessed phenomenal growth in city’s population with its unplanned residential colonies. In November, 1955 the central government setup the Delhi Development Authority. The authority was required to carry out survey and prepare a Master Plan to promote and secure the development of Delhi. *Establishment of Chanakyapuri and addition of new streets* Chanakyapuri is a diplomatic enclave established in the 1950s in New Delhi. Chanakyapuri, translates into the city of Chanakya, and is named after the third century BC advisor and prime minister in the court of great Mauryan king Chandragupta Maurya. It was developed as the first major extension of New Delhi beyond Lutyens Delhi. It plays host to foreign embassies and ambassador residences.

**Table 2:** Streets of Chanakyapuri

Arterial streets	Sub Arterial Streets
Simon Bolivar Marg	Sir Edmund Hillary Marg
San Martin Marg	Tenzing Norgay Marg
Africa Avenue	Ahmad Shah Massoud Marg
Manas Marg	Andre Malraux Marg
Panchsheel Marg	Kwame Nkrumah Marg
Nyaya Marg	Dr. Jose P. Regal Marg
Shantipath	General Jose Artigas Marg
Chandragupta Marg	Abai Marg
Kautilya Marg	
Niti Marg	
Vinay Marg	

*Source:* New Delhi Municipal Council, 2017

**Practice of naming Streets**

The practice of naming streets is not clear before municipalities were formed. The formalization of street names started in 1911 with the creation of Delhi Municipal Council. It was upgraded to Municipal Corporation of Delhi on 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1958 by the act of Parliament. In 1994, New Delhi Municipal Corporation Act was passed to make adequate provisions on the naming and numbering of streets. In 1999, Street Names Authority was constituted by the

Hon’ble Lieutenant Governor of Delhi to decide on naming/renaming of streets. The Street Names Authority has subsequent terms of reference-

- Research and investigation into the names of geographical entities falling wholly within the boundaries of the Union of Territory and the standardization of their names and spelling in the state language.
- Examining of proposals for alteration of existing names

and processing them in accordance with the guidelines given by Government of India. Such proposals for change of names will only be referred to Ministry of Home Affairs.

- Publishing a list of standardized geographical names and guaranteeing their use by the Government Agencies and public concerned.
- Acting as a clearing house for information relating to geographical names.
- Transliterating geographical names falling outside the Union Territory into the state language according to the system of transliterating approved by Central Government.
- Co-ordination and Co-operation with the adjoining states in standardization of names.

In 2006, New Delhi Municipal Corporation passed a resolution on Guidelines for naming of streets which are as follows-

- Request for naming a street should come from a group of persons such as Associations, Manch, Sangh, Group etc. The entity should normally be registered under Societies Registration Act. Resident Welfare Associations under Bhagirathi cell can also send proposals.
- After preliminary inspection, the proposals will be sent to the concerned Deputy Commissioners of the revenue districts as well as the Land Owning Agencies, who will give their views within 30 days. These proposals will be examined by a subcommittee of Street Names Authority chaired by Principal Secretary (Urban Development)
- Only proposals suggested by subcommittee will be placed before the Street Names Authority. Every proposal should be accompanied by a brief write up about the accomplishments of the personality whose name is proposed.
- If any street has been named after a specific dignitary, then a fresh proposal to for naming any other place after the same dignitary will normally not be entertained.
- The service rendered by the nominee to the nation and particularly to Delhi will be main guiding principle for taking a decision.
- A Street should be named as far as possible in the area where the particular dignitary resided.
- Names of living persons will not be entertained.
- While considering names of foreigners (of international standing), the views of Ministry of External Affairs should be obtained.
- The cases of rejection by the council will be directly communicated to the concerned organization.

From the earliest days of settlement at Delhi, ruling governance sought to have a system of street names that reflected their vision of what city should be and how it should function. Establishment of a network of official street names introduces order and differentiation into an originally amorphous landscape. Street nomenclature became a tool by which the authorities were able to project unto the urban setting their perceptions of what unlike areas in the city represent.

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