

Mughal Royal Ladies and Mosques of Shahjahanabad: Construction, Maintenance and Survival in Seventeenth Century

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Introduction

Shahjahanabad was the final of the seven cities of Delhi that were planned and built by the fifth Mughal Emperor Shahjahan when his reign began in 1628. The city was encircled by high walls that ran the length of the newly constructed imperial metropolis, with massive gates strategically placed at vital crossings and routes to the newly established Mughal imperial capital. *Dar-ul-Khilafa* was built with meticulous planning, with the Red Fort strategically placed to command the entire city from a higher pedestrian level, matching the magnificence of the Mughal capital. A massive Masjid, Masjid-e Jahan Numa, was planned for the surrounding hilltop. The hyperbolic description was used to imply that it was not just limited to the city, but also included a much greater geographic area. The Mughal architects paid special attention to aligning these two structures in a symmetrical manner so that they would complement one another. The imperial Masjid is thus situated in such a way that it becomes an integral part of the city.

Acts of piety were performed by the Mughal nobility, nobles, and imperial ladies in equal measure. They also proposed that a Masjid be built within Shahjahan's fortification. Thus, Masjid-e Fatehpuri, Masjid-e Akbarabadi, Zinat-ul Masjid, and Moti Masjid were built in the immediate area of Masjid-e Jahan Numa. In addition to the Jama Masjid, several Masjids were built within the Red Fort and Sunehri Masjid grounds.

Apart from being architectural marvels, these Masjids contain excellent calligraphic designs, and the Quranic inscription shows artisans perfection. Other Masjids, such as *Dhobiyo ki Masjid*, *Mochiyo ki Masjid*, *Masjid-e Ahle Hadees*, *Shia Jama Masjid*, and others, were built by craftsmen, artisans, and other members of the civic society to cater to the requirements of the burgeoning population in the other pockets of Shahjahanabad. It could also be a sign of developing caste and class divides, as well as a sense of identity and affluence among the emerging social groups. As a result, the contained city of Shahjahanabad prospered with several Masjids practically in every neighbourhood, catering to the requirements of sectarian groups, those with sub-sectarian identities,

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