

Temples of Delhi in Historiographical Accounts of the Nineteenth Century

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Synopsis:

In the early nineteenth century Delhi when the government was run by the English East India Company, their officials encouraged efforts at documentation of the city of Shahjahanabad/ Delhi and its environs. Several studies were carried out either commissioned by them or inspired by the way they compartmentalised everything in categories to understand the city and its people better. Three works were undertaken, each more extensive than the other. However, the temples were not documented comprehensively. Out of all the temples that were mentioned in these works only two temples were covered by all the writers. The rest were all different but still the number was very small. Even then the vibrant life of the people of the city and the surroundings was evident.

Delhi was governed by the English East India Company from 1803 CE onwards till 1857. During this period of the first half of the nineteenth century some Company officials began to patronize either through pecuniary benefits or through praise and appreciation works on documentation of the urban fabric of Delhi or of its structures that were extant. This period included persons like Mirza Sangin Beg who wrote *Sair-ul Manazil* (1821)¹ as a commissioned work for William Fraser, Deputy Superintendent to the Resident, Sir David Ochterlony, Saiyid Ahmad Khan who brought out two versions of his mammoth work *Asar-us Sanadid* (1847, 1854) ² because this kind of writing garnered name and fame and was popular with the colonial masters, and Ramji Das who wrote *Tarikh wa Asar-i Dehli* (1854) ³ at the 'instruction' of Col. George William Hamilton. The kind of work these authors did went beyond the scope of documentation to give the readers sociological, commercial, religious and cultural insights of the people of Shahjahanabad, Delhi and its environs.