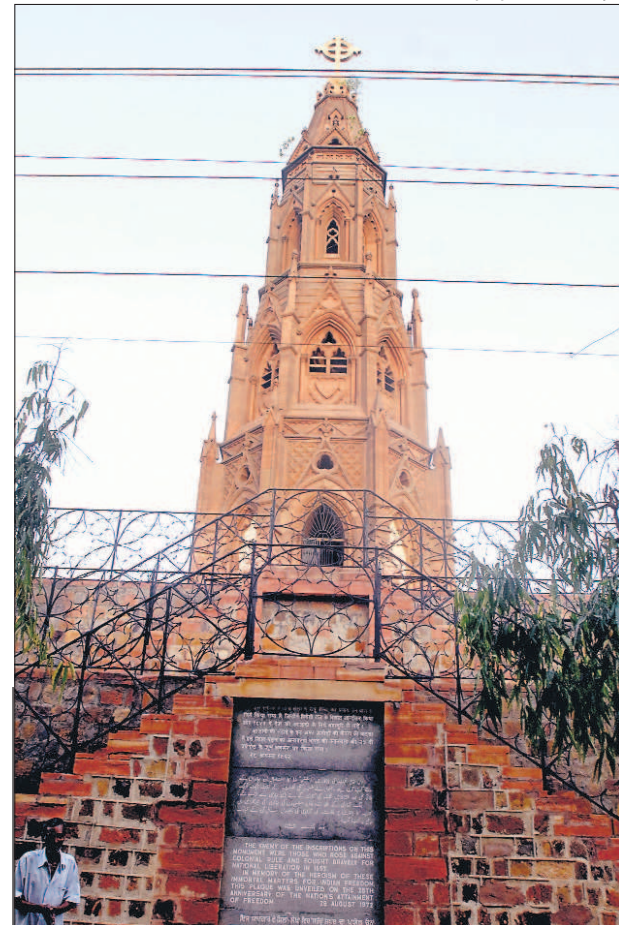


Photos by Piyal Bhattacharjee

1857 IS NOW JUST A Train Ride AWAY

Heritage Walk On Saturday Followed Metro Route To Bring Alive Sepoy Mutiny, Reports Richi Verma



ASOKA PILLAR, MUTINY MEMORIAL

Nearest Metro Station **VISHWA-VIDYALA** Distance **15 MINUTE WALK**

There exists three pillars in Delhi — Hindu Rao, Firoz Shah Kotla and Qutub Minar. The Asoka Pillar next to Hindu Rao Hospital, bearing Asokan edicts, dates to third century BC and was brought here from Meerut by Firoz Shah Tughlaq in 1356. It was supposedly thrown down and broken into five pieces by an explosion. In 1838, it came in the possession of Hindu Rao and in 1866, the broken pieces were joined together and erected here.

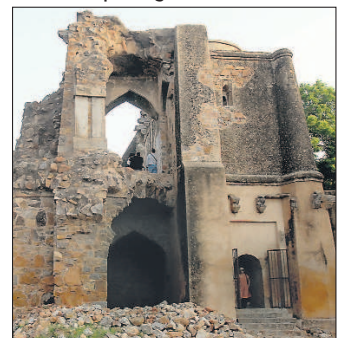
The Mutiny Memorial was erected in the memory of the officers and soldiers of the British and "natives" who were killed in action or wounded between May 30 and September 20, 1857. The building, much of it Gothic influenced, is raised on a base in two levels. A staircase inside leads to the top. The Memorial is looked after by the department of archaeology and is very well maintained.

PIR GHAIB, TUGHLAQ-PERIOD BAOLI

Nearest Metro Station **VISHWA-VIDYALA** Distance **20 MINUTE WALK**

Both heritage sites are under central protection by the ASI. There are contrary opinions about Pir Ghaib which is described as a hunting lodge or even an observatory. The Tughlaq-period baoli, just a few steps away from the ghaib is not accessible. Historians say there exists a passage inside the baoli that is directly connected to the baoli in Red Fort. Evidence of the same is yet to be unearthed.

The baoli is covered with deep vegetation. According to officials, the baoli is under renovation and will be made more accessible by the times the Games begins. At present, from a distance, it appears to be just a hole in the ground.



FLAGSTAFF TOWERS, CHAUBURJI MOSQUE

Nearest Metro Station **VISHWA-VIDYALA** Distance **15 MINUTE WALK**

Both these sites are protected, one by ASI and other by Delhi government's department of archaeology. To reach these structures, one has to walk through the ridge. Flagstaff tower is said to be the highest point in the northern ridge and it was here that British women and children gathered before escaping to Karnal in 1857.

Chauburji Mosque is much older, built in the 14th century during Firoz Shah's reign, but many additions were made during the Mughal rule.

A lone ASI guard says the monument sees few visitors. "I had never even heard of this monument before. Smaller monuments like these are like Delhi's hidden treasures," said MNC executive Akshay Hiremath who took part in the heritage walk with his sister. Both monuments appear to be in a good shape with ASI giving special emphasis on restoring Chauburji mosque. Inside the mosque, though, one can see broken patches and scribbling on the facade.



A German national, a commercial pilot, a retired couple, an MNC executive. Everyday problems apart, this motley group shares a common concern — Delhi's heritage. And that concern saw them coming out on Saturday afternoon to walk along the paved paths of the Northern Ridge, retracing the footsteps of those who took part in the 1857 uprising.

Successfully bridging the gap between history and modern technology, a heritage walk organised by conservationist Surekha Narain brought alive the 1857 mutiny for Delhiites as they followed the new Metro line to Jehangirpuri. Rather than using private vehicles or autorickshaws, the walkers used the Metro instead to move from one heritage monument to another, which were once considered inaccessible but were now just a few steps away from a Metro station.

"Everyone goes to Red Fort or Purana Qila, but it's these lesser known monuments in Delhi that showcase the real heritage of the capital. Very few people go to these monuments because of either ignorance or because they are considered inaccessible. But after realising that so many monuments are just walking distance from Metro stations, more people seem to be interested in visiting them," said Narain. The story of 1857 can be relived through this walk and most of the monuments are being renovated by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for the Commonwealth Games next year.

M Rajan and his wife Jamna are frequent travellers ever since Rajan retired from UNICEF almost 10 years ago. The couple commute between Chennai and Delhi frequently. "We appreciate history and like to travel a lot. Recently, we went to Ireland and saw many historic castles there," said Jamna. For German national Katharina Von Maltzan, who has been in India for three months, this was a unique opportunity to see more of the city that is to be her home for the next few years. Nivedita Bhasin, a pilot with Air India added: "I have been to the popular tourist spots but there are so many unknown historical sites that I wanted to learn more about."



BADLI KI SERAI

Nearest Metro Station **ADARSH NAGAR** Distance **5 MINUTE WALK**

Graded A in terms of heritage value by INTACH Delhi Chapter, this Mughal-period structure witnessed a historic battle on June 8, 1857 between the rebel sepoys and the British. Ultimately, the British troops were defeated here. The significance of the place goes beyond that as historians say that the Alipur road used to cross through this place and it was used as a resting place for travellers.

Most of the structure has been conserved by ASI and facade repairs and massive garden development have been carried out. Fencing has been put up all around the structure to keep anti-social elements out. Though the monument is open to visitors, ASI guards posted there keep vigil to prevent defacement of the structure

