

## A6 - Selected Interviews





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## Interview with Tour Animators April 2013

Interview and Guided Heritage Walk with Tour Animators on the 17th April 2013

Location: Taj Heritage Walk Route

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*How did you become tour animators?*

Can I tell about myself? Yes

Actually in my childhood, when I was studying, that time nobody knows about the heritage things. We have in the Taj Mahal area: the lesser known monuments. But when the organisation [CURE] started to do their work, in that area,

at that time they did a lot of discussions with the village people to preserve all those heritage sites. At that time they also discuss with us, and at that time we were working with animals - as we have the buffalo, cow.. so we were passing our time after coming from our school at the 11 Steps [Kachhpura monument] at the bank of the river. The men from my organization [CURE] also passed their time in the afternoon over there. We were studying there when they were watching us. When they saw that these kids, they come here regularly and they come here with their animals, and they also carry their books, and after do some studying, and after 3 or 4 o clock they go and start their work on the farm. So they discussed with us in which class do you study? What do you want to

do in your future? We didn't have any idea. We had never planned about our future. We were doing like that, and our teacher, our parents and our guardians would suggest to us: you are doing like that. And so the organization [CURE] told us all about the training. Just you will take some training, and you'll earn some kind of money and support to your family. At that time they didn't tell us about the heritage sites. They didn't tell us about the heritage walk in that time. We were students so we became excited that we would take training - it would be helpful in our studies. So we joined the training.

At that time they gave us training on English speaking and personality development classes.

The first time they provided this we went to Sanjay Palace - near our [current] office. During the training, they called us for more and more discussions. In the beginning time, there were 28 person taking the training. But at that time, all of the training was there, and there was no opportunity to earn something. Some of the students were involved in some kind of business. Some kind of jobs. They just thought that 'we are doing our job, and we are earning, and if we invest our time in doing the meetings, and going here and there, how can we earn?'. So they left us. So after some students left we were 24. But after completing that training they [CURE] called us again and they did a discussion about the heritage sites. In the beginning, they were just

doing their work on the educational programme, livelihoods, and improving sanitation - only that. But when they found all those heritage sites, they thought to develop a heritage walk to give earning opportunities to the youth boys who were involved in the training programme. So finally, they had found all those heritage sites, and they told us that normally the tourists come here, in the Taj Mahal area, and the tourists walk at the bank of the river. And they take some photos of the Taj from the back side. We decided to make a final route in this Trans-Yamuna area, tourists can come and take more pictures with more and more information.

So they told us that they have these heritage

sites, older than the famous monuments - and all the tourists come here only to see the famous monuments. But they also wait around these heritage monuments, so why don't you try to highlight these monuments? So that time, we didn't know what we would do. Firstly they gave us some work - do a survey along the areas where we have lesser known monuments. What kind of atmosphere was there. How many lesser known monuments we have there. How many years old. So that time we did a survey. And according to that survey we found lots of history and lots of areas older than the famous monuments and they had a different importance in themselves. So we could do something special. There were 18 members in our group, and we gave this

information to our organization [CURE].

In that time there was a man who had a project to develop a heritage walk. He has his own travel agency. He was involved in tourism. So he contacted us and suggested to us here to develop a heritage walk. So our organisation gave the project to him and he developed around this area a heritage walk. He had many discussions with us. And finally we found the route. The organization selected six low income settlements: Rambagh Basti, Kucha Walif Khan, Yamuna Village, Moti Mahal... [two more] and Kachhpura. So in those settlements we have one lesser known monument. We developed a route with the lesser known monuments from Rambagh Basti to Kachhpura.

And we tried to collect the history about those lesser known monuments and about those areas.

*Was that mainly your work? Who else was involved?* Actually at that time, there were 18 members [names them] - actually the last three are my cousins - and some girls also were involved. In 2006, the two who were the experts at speaking English, were involved to do the heritage walk, with some member of our organization, and some member from the heritage-walk organiser. But we also wanted to be able to explain these things, so we decided to practice hard, speaking English. At that time we didn't properly have a heritage walk, and the two boys selected left because they couldn't get a proper earning. By that point



we were down to eight members. At that time, the heritage walk organiser came to us. We had collected all the history on the lesser known monuments. He asked us to tell him about the monuments. Because we had practiced, we had a little idea about what we had there. From that time we started to explain this to people: not just to the guests but also there were village people around the lesser known monuments that came.

[second animator] I was sleeping. My friend came to my home, and he described to me about the heritage walk developing in this TajGanj area. But I didn't know what this heritage walk was. So I went with him [to CURE] and I tried to know about the heritage walk. Rajesh sir [CURE employee]

described to me his work and he supported me and was getting prepared with the studies for the heritage walk. He supported me in English speaking - I am trying to speak very good.

*Rachel note: English speaking is a huge part of the training and selection methods. Not only is this a clear sign that this tour is being tailored to outsiders more than locals, it also raises the issue of tourism and globalisation. irony that when people come to see the local and the particular they need certain global things in order to interpret their surroundings (eg. a way of communicating that they understand). On top of this, people will start acting with globally accepted manners, learning how to cook less spicy food etc*

*in order to trade with visitors, at the expense of the particular. Some tourists will want this, some will be disappointed by it.*

At that time when we called them [points at other animators who are present] they didn't know about the heritage things. They were involved with the tourists. He [points] was taking the photos at the Taj Mahal, and he [points] was working at the Boutique Centre - many tourists go there to purchase all those things. As they were doing their work, we told them we have some heritage sites here. Some old buildings around this area. Everyone knows about the Taj Mahal, so why don't you try to find out about all of the things you have in this area, like your settlement - all

the settlements in this area have different stories. So we just told them you have Teli Paada. In the beginning the people there were making oil. Mustard oil with a colu - like a well. A well had a wheel - it was like that. Those people were called the Teli. Oil in Hindi is Tel. And they were living in that area. That's why it is known as Teli Paada. In the beginning, there were seven brothers (the Dukesh) and they came from Afghanistan and they were business men. They wanted to do their business in this area in Agra. They came here and they started to take the oil from the seeds. And they sold it to the merchants here. After doing this business they got a lot of money, and they were murdered. But most of the people living there now are descendants of one of the brothers. We tell all

these people as they are living in Dalhai, Dalhai also has a different story. We are telling the people who live in these areas. It is very important in itself. So why don't you try to explain about your village? You are working with tourists, and tourists come in this area. So firstly we show them all the sites that we have in this area. And they also have an importance in themselves. So they came with us 7 or 8 times when we were collecting the history about this area. And then we provide them English speaking and personality development classes. From that time they are coming with us.

*Rachel note: when preserving/conserving/restoring cultural fragments - architecture, arts, festivals - people everywhere tend to find it hard to*

*explain why exactly they are doing it, reverting to the explanation 'it's valuable', 'it's rare', and here the animators appear to have been told 'it's important in itself' - comes up a couple of times without further expansion. 'it's important in itself' - important to whom? If you have to tell people something is important in itself, presumably it is not important to them -yet- and so 'it is important in itself' could perhaps mean - it has the potential to be important to you (if so, why?) or it could mean it has the potential to be interesting to other people (academic world, tourist world).*

*Can you tell me a bit more about the collection of the stories? Who you went to, how you recorded it, did CURE give you information? How did it*

*work?*

We also have some colleagues - we are working for CURE. Firstly me and [points] came into this area and we discuss with the village people that we want to collect the history of this area. So mostly the history we collect from the village people. And then we talk to these two guys that we are collecting the history about this area - if you know anything about these areas please tell us. As the village people were telling us we were writing it down on the pad. And we were taking some pictures. They asked their fathers. for example what is the history of the Shahi mosque. And their fathers and grandfathers told them and they noted it down. Also CURE provided us

with some ideas. They gave us some documents so that we could collect more and more history. We had some cuttings, some books about Agra, some books about the lesser known monuments. We also looked on the net. Wikipedia. We collected the history of the lesser known monuments from so many things. And in this area there is a person the Pel Manji. He is a Maulvi and he has some old pictures of this area. So we made a contact with him.

*Rachel note: the animators are building up their own method of creating heritage walks from scratch - adapting it and learning from it but it is a kind of knowledge that will be very difficult to teach and pass on to others. Especially at the*

*moment because it is not even documented.*

*So how did you check that the information was true?*

We took the information back to the [CURE] office and they checked it. We checked facts with the ASI also. And we checked in books, on the internet. We went to the ASI office. All these things we did for the 'cross check'. We then discussed it all with people in the village once again. CURE held a formal meeting with the community to check these things. They told them that here are the lesser known monuments that we have selected. They gave the information to the village people that we are developing a heritage walk, and first

of all we are trying to find out about the heritage sites. Some people had old weapons and knives, old currency and we told people to look after these things, because they have a special value in themselves. We told them if we try to find these things now, it would be hard.

*You've now done a lot of research into two areas: Kachhpura and now Tajganj. Do you think there is anybody out there who knows as much as you about the history of these areas?*

I think maybe we know the most. But the person involved in doing that work, he is the person who knows the most about it because he has been concentrating on that thing. So when you are

working on the heritage walk you have to learn everything about the area. When we don't know things we talk to the people living there. They have found that this kind of knowledge takes a long time to build up and just can't be done without spending time in the place, forming relationships with people etc.

*Are these people mainly old people?*

Yes they are mostly the older people.

*So in 20 years' time, do you think that people here will know the history of their area? Or will it be more forgotten?*

Oh people don't discuss the history much but if you go to someone here and ask a question then they will answer 20 more questions too.

*But after those people die, will the next generation be able to answer those questions?*

Nobody talks about it, so the young people are forgetting. I'm trying to talk to the old people and teach this information to the young people so that the next generation will know it too.

*Why are you doing this? So that more people can earn a living as tour guides? Or because you just think it is good for people to know the area's history?*

We tell the youth boys firstly being a tour animator is good work and you learn a lot. But secondly we tell them that they have many members of their family and their neighbourhood involved in different kinds of work, selling different things. But if someone comes into the city looking for this type of thing how do they know to come to this place to buy from these people? The tour animators get to know the whole area and what everybody is making. For example here people are involved in the marble work and the garland making. But they don't have the personal attachments [contacts] to sell to people coming into Agra wanting these things. But the tour animators have wider knowledge of the city, and more contacts outside the area and then they

know these things are made here and they can make the link.

*This way of linking a previously insular and closed off market to the wider city and the world - their understanding of the importance and benefits of creating associations, talking to people (networking) is what they have discovered. This puts them in a potentially very powerful role.*

*What do the people here think about bringing tourists into the communities?*

Actually when we talk to the youth generation, they just think some tourists are coming. Maybe they make some comments if they see some girls.

Some of the older generation are agitated. But actually everybody wants to do some kind of business, and everybody wants to earn something. And as we go to each to develop a history, we will go down a street, and see some shops there and we might purchase something. And other people can make a living by becoming tour guides.

People who don't have a government job or a good professional job, they can earn money by doing these things. With the girls there is more hesitation - they never talk about these kind of things. In Kachhpura, the girls now know that they can also do these kind of activities. But here in Diwan ji Mohalla, the girls are only involved in garland making. They actually know many things!

Making greeting cards, bookmarks, wall hangings for their own houses they know! But they don't do it much. They're always making the garlands. So I'm just trying to encourage them to make other things in their spare time for their homes and their relatives, and occasionally selling them if someone is interested in order to buy more materials to continue to practice making these things, and slowly they might sell more.

*Another benefit they have noted is the opportunities that can be created for increasing the ambition and confidence of girls. Again, the fact that they are coming into this neighbourhood is introducing girls to people and ideas that are different. They are again making associations -*



*girls that may not be at school and hang out with their sisters are now perhaps going to learn crafts with other girls from outside the family - could lead to other business ventures, opportunities...*

*How much does one garland cost?*

About 1rp for 1 garland. But in marriage seasons 2rp per garland.

*Do you think there are different kinds of tourist?*

Yes, we have two or three kinds of tourist. In my experience doing the Mughal Heritage Walk, firstly you have people that are interested in the people's activities in this area: the sanitation project [in Kachhpura], the educational programme, - the

making of the project, the DEWATS over there. The second kind we have is normal tourists like Indian tourists. They just like taking photos and also comedy. If someone is here to do the comedy, this tourist is very much interested. And then there are students who are the most interested to know about everything. And then there are old people - they really want to know all about everything, the development of the historic village, the monuments, heritage. The young foreign tourists are very interested to learn something about the projects like putting in the toilets. They are often wanting to know how it was done for their own projects. These are the kind of people that come on my heritage walk.

So do you think the heritage walk attracts a more interested kind of tourist - the Taj mahal gets a lot of 'normal' tourists who take lots of photos. Does the heritage walk get less of those kind of tourist?

So some people, they will come to Agra, go to the tourist office and they will see only the Taj. Some tourists will come without a plan, and he will search on the internet for many important things in Agra, so he will not just go to Taj but also the fort, the gardens. He will search through different hotels here. And he might walk here and there without any help - because some people have to hire a tour guide. But if they don't have a guide they just search on the net and he might not want a guide, but would prefer to just go to these

things independently and then read the notice boards there. But if he searches the net and finds the Mughal Heritage Walk, he has to call someone to come here. It is not that one kind of person goes to the Taj, one kind comes on this walk, but it depends on the interest of the tourist.

*Have you ever had any bad tourists on your walk?*

No! Tourists are not bad.

If you have visitors and relatives in your house, you always give the treats. The Indian tradition is that guests are always with god.

*Guest/host scenario between neighbourhood and*

*tourist is very polite, very accepting. However, it makes the idea of encouraging the neighbourhood to demand mutual respect much more difficult. If the neighbourhood put tourists in a guest/consumer role the area will grow and change to meet tourist demand without the necessary resistance/critique from the residents - it is unlikely to contribute to the civic life of the area.*

*Say at some point, for any reason, you want to leave this job, or you can't do this job any more. It seems like you are doing a very important job. How are you going to make sure that it continues when you stop?*

In that situation, we have other youth boys that

are our animators. Let's say we are two animators here, and I have an opportunity to go outside this area to study, for example. At that time, we have some youth boys, and we will see if they are interested. I am doing some training and education in this area as a separate job for CURE, and from these students I will select some (girls and boys) to do some activities related to the heritage walk.

*How is all the information that you have collected recorded at the moment?*

Ah I don't have it. I just have the information as I know it. Firstly I am to note it all down on paper - do all the hard work and note it down on paper.

Then I can give the paper to the students.

*Did CURE write down the information that you collected when writing the tour?*

As we collected all the information for the heritage tour, we gave it to the CURE office. They went through it and made changes and shortened it to a script. After that, we made many more changes. Our original information was very very detailed and we wanted to tell people everything, but there is not time in the tour. So the information in the script is much shortened.

*But you probably want to record the original long version for the tour guides so that if people on the*

*tour ask questions the guides know the answers?*

Yes. But actually nobody we have is expert to learn all those things yet [meaning they have nobody who can learn the information in English well enough].

*Currently the potential of the 'extra information' (that didn't go into the tour) to make the tour better isn't on the radar of their expectations of this project. They're just hoping to find enough young people to be able to learn the script in good English. And who could ask them to spend time writing out all of the extra information when they are so busy with everything else?*

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*We then decided to do the heritage walk, recording as much as possible of what the boys knew about points on the walk - the start of a permanent record of their knowledge.*

*Rachel note - the whole of this tour is a mix of myth, wikipedia, anecdotes, books, ASI reports, newspaper articles, misunderstandings. This mix is the lived experience of this particular place by these particular animators, and is therefore, in my opinion, a captivating tour but there is also a 'realness' to it as you get a glimpse of how they experience their world. This is somehow lost on factual tours delivered in places like Ahmedabad*

*where a myth is introduced as a myth and a statistic delivered as fact... which is not how most people experience their neighbourhood. However, if I led the tour of Tajganj with the same script, it wouldn't work - my experience of the area will never be like this.*

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This temple belongs to the Brahmin community. The Bramin community, in Mughal times, were settled at the Bank of the Yamuna River, now where we have the Taj. The ministers of Shah Jehan visited that area, and found that it was a suitable place to build the Taj Mahal. So they talked to the village people, discussed with the

Bramin community that here they would like to build the Taj Mahal in the memory of Shah Jehan's wife: at that time Shah Jehan was the emperor - the 5th Mughal emperor. So they resettled all those people into this area.

Also we have a Shiva Temple (points out temple behind). The Brahma community said to Shah Jehan's ministers that they would need the same things that they had had at the river bank. So the ministers built this Shiv Temple: however, they left their statue of Shiva at the river bank site - they would not carry it here. A new murti of Lord Shiva was built over there (gestures). So as we have all the houses that settled here, mostly are the Brahma. And they come here to worship. So here

we have the full family of the lord Shiva: Nandi, Ganesh, Parvati. We have three major gods: 1. Lord Shiva, 2. Vishnu. and 3. Brahma. So I think Brahma is the creator, Vishnu is the saviour, and Ganesh always kills the animals. So these are the gods. And here from a little bit far, maybe 3 or 5 km people come here to worship early in the morning time and in the evening time. They do their arti. And also we have a priest here. Every year when we have a Kumbh Mela, he goes there for one month and then he comes back here.

*So the people who come here are mainly from the Brahmin Caste?*

Yes. In the Hindu religion we have so many castes.

Some are the SC, CDO, Brahma, Kushwar, and some are other different castes. So any caste he comes here to worship - they come here with the Brahma. And Brahma always call the priest. They do the worship, and they know the matter of the worship. We have so many kinds of worship: some time a new baby is born, at that time we have a different kind of worship. And whenever we have a marriage, we have a different kind of worship. And sometimes someone dies. That time we do a different kind of worship. So when we do these things, always the Brahma does it. And according to the study method, like somebody they are doing heir bachelor of arts, and somebody is studying accounts, or bachelor of mathematics, like that the Brahma also take their studies into

the different methods of worship. And there is one festival known as Ganda Desela Festival. From the East Gate of the Taj to the west: Goa Chowk - (Goa Chowk is near the the Hajju Pura Office) we have a fair. We have one festival: the kite festival. We always celebrate it on the 14th January. We call it Matta Sentranti. From this festival to the Ganda Desela Festival, the youth boys start to fly the kites. On that Ganda Desala Festival, the youth boys have large competitions flying the kites. There are no teams! Nobody knows who is flying the kites! Everyone is just trying to cut the kites.

*Do all the communities take part in it? Yes. Everybody.*

*And so which community do you think uses this temple the most? The Brahmin community?*

This one: Basai Kalan. As they are the people that were relocated.

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This was the property of the Rai Sahib. We will see his Haveli on this route. At one time, he was the owner of 58 villages here until 1953. In 1953 the Yamuna flooded. At that time the villages had a lot of loss. Some people lost their houses. At that time we had temporary houses. Some people lost all their things. So at that time the Rai stopped taking Lagan: tax to give to the government. Up

to that time they had been working under British rule. At that time [Mughal times] he collected all kinds of cereal from the farmers, and gave to the Amra - king. To manage all those things inside the communities. At that time he was happy with his work. So the British gave to that person a title: Rai to his family as well. So from 1936 his family became known as a Rai family. Because of his family's work collecting the cereal: tax to pay to the government, the Rai was happy with his work. And in that time he was the owner of the 58 villages. So this was the property of that person. And when we had a flood: the second time of the flood, 1978, a time when the people faced so many kinds of loss, at that time he gave this area to the government to run here.



So the building of this school (gestures) - it's old, from that time - it's a government primary school for children from 5 years old. We have some near settlements - they can't afford to send their children to the private school. They send their children to this school. They take their studies for 5 years and then they go to the market to do their higher education at private school.

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We also have a well here no? Points at the pond in the courtyard.

This temple is not much old. It's around 20 years old. But before 20 years back here we had some

garden. When the people started to sell this property, after 1978, after the flood, (in 1978 we also had a flood), so after that some village people started to sell the land here. People started to give property and land here to their relatives.

50 years back, we only had here a garden. Then after 1978, people started to sell the land around here: they thought there were some other kinds of things that they needed.

Sometimes, when people came to the settlement, they would pass their night here in the garden.

If the girls who lived in these areas got married, at that time, the boy's family would come here.

The boys they would have to pass their time here for one night. They would stay one night here. So people started planting plants in this garden. And over time they started to put some statues here - as you can see here is the statue of goddess Durga. When people started selling the land, they put this temple here to protect the garden.

According to the community [wishes], there are two kinds of fair - two fairs per year, for two festivals. At that time [before the temple was built] the procession [went to the panchayat past here. And so at that time this temple was built here on that procession route].

At the time of the construction of this property

[neighbouring this temple site] they started to build this temple, and then more people started coming here to worship the goddess Durga also.

*And which community uses this temple the most?*  
Basai Kalan, Natha Nagar

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From that well the people were taking their water for drinking purposes and also the people were irrigating their gardens around this area. In the Tajganj area we had 62 wells as they were using to irrigate the gardens and for drinking purposes. It is said that there were 7 wells in one Baoli, and it also had steps down into the water. But now it has

been damaged. Nobody was here to take care of those wells. It is not dry even now, but the owner has made some houses - they covered this baoli and they built their houses on that.

*Did they build this trough?* Yes. They built this. At that time it was the road that people were using to get to the Batiyavaad? - into another city when leaving Agra. So that time they were using horses and carts, not vehicles. So that time all those animals would drink this water.

The water from these taps here still comes from the baoli [well] underneath the houses.

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At that time this was all open space - 30 years back they were coming here with their cereals to sell here.

*And they would just take a space at the side of the road, and put their things there?*

Yes. And when all the people were passing that route, they would purchase the cereal and then they went to their villages and their houses at that time. And also we had a garden in this area. 25 - 30 years back we didn't have many houses in this area. So when the Rai family started to give property to their relatives, people started to build their houses. Space was not enough in that time and people stopped selling their cereal here. and

just sold it at the south gate of the Taj. Still now there is a cereal market there.

At that time, this area was also known for the sweets. There are two kinds of sweets: cajak and guljani. Cajak was made in Delhi. Guljani is made of milk and grams.

Also we have another well. I told you about the 62 wells all funded by the rich person (rai). In this area, we had the garden. But we didn't have any wells here for drinking purposes. So the Rai family with some other rich local families funded the building of this well. So the village people near here use this well. At that time people up to 7 or 8 km away were coming to this well to take water.

Up to 22 years ago there was water in this well. At that time the government starting supplying water to households. The well dried out. Now people can take water easily at their homes. They don't need to go out to take water. People don't want to do extra hard work so they forget that we also have some wells. They forget that we can also use these wells, recharge these wells. They dont think that these wells could be recharged. So nobody is looking after the wells now.

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That area was Basai Kalan - points to the part of the walk that we have just completed. And this area is Natha Nagar - points to the next part of the

walk.

I told you that every settlement, they have their own story. When the emperor was ruling, there were many battles, wars. And were needed different kinds of weapons. And also the elephants, horses were needed. At first the people making these things and looking after animals did not live here [in Agra]. The soldiers had a problem collecting all the horses and elephants. They relocated here, and gave the title Nahar Nagar.

And next [on the walk] we have Bilochpura. The people making weapons and armour were living at Delhi Gate. They made lot of different kinds of weapons. Shah Jahan had a battle with his cousin.

Both Shah Jahan and his cousin were getting their weapons and armour from this group of people at Delhi Gate. So Shah Jahan took all of the armourers and gave them land here on condition that they made weapons only for him. These people were known as the Bilochi. So this area became known as Bilochpura.

Just in front of us we have a little bit of property [points to a private garden opposite]. It belongs to the Rai family. Just this small garden remains for their own personal use and some small buildings which they will not sell. The family use the garden in the morning time and the evening time. There is also their haveli. It is a very old haveli, but according to them they have made repairs. There

were other havelis here, all belonging to the Rai/ rich family in the village. At that time there was a pataa [property ownership deed] for the Rai family and their relatives. See that gate there? Behind that gate there is a chowkra. In that chowkra the Rai family would sit and do all their calculations about all the taxes - all the grain, cereal that they were collecting from the farmers. They gave this to the government.

*And now what do the family do?*

Now this family are educated people. His son is a chartered accountant. And if there are any normal issues [in the village], they try to sort out those issues. But this area is now under the

Agra Government so normally they call the Ward Councillors if there are issues, but sometimes they solve the issues themselves.

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This school is 30 years old. At this time, around 100 students study here. It is a charity funded school.

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This temple is from before Mughal times. At this time it was used for ceremonies, parties,

This is not only a temple. It's also a livelihood centre. Normally the village people, as they collect

flowers. As we will see, some village people they have some white flowers. They sell the jasmine flowers. We enter the temple where a ring of men are buying and selling jasmine. In the morning and evening time the jasmine smells very strongly.

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This is the Shahi Mosque. It is known as the Kali Masjid. Why don't you come inside? This mosque is 20 years older than the Taj. Taj built in 1630, and this mosque was built around 1610. Here we had a mud [structure]. And that mud [structure] was used by Diwani Begum. The mother of the lovely wife of Shah Jahan. Shah Jahan gave his wife whatever she wanted, and at that time Diwani Begum came

to this place 5 times a day, and she faced problems going up here and coming down because she was an old lady. So Mumtaz went with her. So Mumtaz mahal discussed [this] with Shah Jahan and asked that a mosque was built here. At that time, there were two servants also. They supported Diwani Begum.

So at that time Mumtaz Mahal and Diwani Begum were praying in the mosque - every day. From this time the mosque is known as the mosque of Diwani Begum.

This tomb that we have over here (gestures) is the servants of Diwani Begum. They prayed here. They were also doctors - they had natural powers.

According to the natural powers, they did the treatments. So sometimes when people in the village had problems, they would use their natural powers to fix it. See this tank here - it was filled with water. Behind this mosque there is a well, and the water from there was used for this mosque. The water became black. And these two [saints] distilled? the black water to make one [clean] water. They put some kind of (itna?) They brought namaj. And they got some kind of powers from nature. They put some kind of (itna?) into that water. This water they always gave to the patient. And by using that water the patient always became right. And the reason of the death of this one (points to one grave) is that nearby there is a settlement: Hajju Pura. At that time there was a

girl and she had a family. Her parents wanted to do a magic [spell] on that girl. She had some kind of natural power. She was facing some problems with the natural power. So he [saint] found that she had a problem and he tried to solve that problem. One night she? and he and some people were staying here at the mosque. He was doing the distilling? here but he felt there was a problem and he went to meet the girl's family. He wanted to find out what he should do to save that girl. So he went to them. She had natural powers but he also had powers. And two or three people became dead. They had some natural powers and they came again and they were doing the spell/distill? to that girl. But he could not make her [better] properly. He could not satisfy them. So they killed



him with their natural powers.

His servant the chisti was doing his service at the time when the saint was killed. He started to take care of this mosque and this area and he started to worship over here. And by doing all these things he also became famous as a doctor. He started to do all those things as his maser was doing here. Each evening, he filled the water from the well into the tank, and each morning he gave this water to the patients. After using this water for two or three days, the patients became alright. They had natural powers. At that time he was preparing and supplying some food, and the servants, some poor people were also living in the ground part [level] of this mosque. There we have

some rooms. There the poor people as they didn't have any kind of [place to stay] were passing their night here. So he and his family were giving the food to them, and Mumtaz Mahal and Diwani Begum also. And so when they [good servants] died they were buried over here.

And just outside of this mosque we have a school. It is a religious school. There the students learn the religious education like the arabic language, urdu language and farsi also. All the muslim holy books are written in arabic and urdu language. So they learn over there. But this school runs two times in a day. In the morning time, the malby, the teacher teaches all the subjects the students need like English, mathematics, Hindi, science,

sociology, other subjects also, and in the evening and afternoon he teaches arabic language, urdu language, and how to read the holy books. So when we go down, we will go down those steps (gestures) and I will point out [the school] but we will not enter the site.

Actually in 2005, at that time there was a chief of the ASI. They started to take care of all those lesser known monuments. Those front steps (gestures) were going down from the opposite side [of the mosque] - going to the community side. But according to the rules of the ASI, under the 200m [rule] we can't make new construction. But the houses are older than 100 years or so, so what does the government do for those people? They

just changed the route. How can we enter into the mosque and how can we go out? So they just built these steps onto the main road.

As we pass this route, [on the main road] there we will see the rooms where the poor people were living. Nobody was here to take care of those people so at that time, he [saint] gave them food, and Mumtaz Mahal and Diwani Begum. He always took care of them.

(Looking at the tank in the mosque) So this was filled in recently with the stone tiles and the channels from the well are gone? Yes.

See the domes are all black? That's why local

people call it the kali mosque.

And now if we try to fill this tank, the water leaks out. At that time, we had a plant at the centre of the tank - a palm. And it was kucha at that time. But when the ASI refitted all those things, they cut out the plant, made the tank, put in all this plaster, all those things.... and there is no water here (gestures).



## Tour Animators May 2014

*These notes were written out by tour animators (Consistent Collaborators in this research) after Fieldtrip 4 in May 2014 in order to contribute further to CURE's Taj Heritage Walk.*

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LODHI TEMPLE: - Lodi temple is here during the period of Ibrahim Lodi. The domb of the temple built in same design as we can see in tomb in deewan ji ka mohalla. This temple having a committee

[nine names and contact details removed]

And two are the big flower merchants are here

whose is coming in summer vacation every year to sale flowers. They are from TOHRRE VILLAGE. It is said that Rayville people grown in the only in two villages which is known as ITTORA and TOHRRE VILLAGE. Peoples were coming here to sale their flowers every year only for 4 months into summer session. These villages are about 10-15 km far from this point. People from near slums come here to buy flowers as they big merchants. Big merchants give to slums women to make garlands by making garlands peoples earn here. Mostly big merchant from deewan ji ka mohalla and from all the slums in tajganj come here to buy flowers only Rayville. Big merchants as they come here to sell farmers flowers called DALAL. [names and phone numbers removed]

Lodi temple celebrates especially nine days of goddess Durga and put here a fair for three days. In that festival some are eating stall, two jhula, entertainments stall, totally cosmetic, pottery and kitchen base things etc. for this festival everybody gives donation from temple comity and village people also. These two merchants give like 5000 or 10000 rupees as comity needs during celebration time of nine days festival time.

This comity do some work also here like

1. Cleaning
2. White wash
3. Repairing
4. Arrange drinking water

5. Lighting
6. Decoration of that particular area
7. Listing of shop keepers

this is a little meeting with community people to give them some idea about heritage and heritage walk around tajganj near people houses and give some information about development plan for tajganj area as CURE prepared so committee suggest some sites for include in the heritage walk like:

- Shakti mandir with school (learning processing)
- Lodhi temple (with livelihood center)
- Big flowers merchants houses

- Making garland in deewan ji ka mohalla's houses in each street.
- Grander machine (local machine to make flour )
- Some work shop to make test tube of scientific lab.
- Mosque with Muslims study system.
- Pathawari (local temple use for every events)
- Chain making in billochpura and deewan ji ka mohalla.
- A fair at lodhi temple is the month of September or October.
- Link the people in heritage walk as they play drams and harmonium.( Salim and bahadur khan)

People having some problems with ASI and POLICE DEPARTMENT. People can sell their property and can do registry and can get maps of the houses by the name of basai kalan. People paying to government for registry why ASI and OTHERS DEPARTMENT coming here to stop to make houses. Near Shakti mandir was a well but around that well it was opens. It had a samiti also but samiti has been broken so nobody paying attention on that temple. Some people around that temple covering the land of that temple. It is having a school also.

In ancient time billochpura and deewan ji ka mohalla was not having so many houses. It was having only few houses and they involved in

different work like some were farmers, some were meat seller, some were doing marble work and some were doing chain making work. Both slums having little muddy mountains. Those areas covered by forest and different kind of the animals were there. People afraid because animals killing the small kids. There was not much houses. Only six families in deewan ji ka mohalla and ten in billochpura. At billochpura (tila) forest people were using to take out skin from animals and prepared to sell as meat. In both slums having small pond but houses started to build up here so forest, pond and muddy tilla remove from here for 20 years back when the construction started. Deewan ji ka mohalla

Deewan ji ka mohalla known for the head of toli (soldier group) known as Deewan in shahjahan time. having some new construction infraint of tomb but till 20yrs back there were six families living here. They were known for different name. Hotam singh is a potter in Deewan ji ka mohalla who is saying that in older days about 40 years back there were few families living here.first they were having kaccha houses. they used to stay here. From somany years back six families were living here in kaccha houses which name is:-

[six names removed]

And all the families have known by different name like:-



[four names removed]

Still now they are living but now they have heritage paccha houses. Also suggest about work

- Chain making
- Making bire for chain
- Kite making in billochpura
- Having animal (production from animals)

[four names removed]

These families having animals like buffalo, cows and goat which can we use to show different kind of production.

By doing discussion with so many people found that infraint of the tomb DEEWAN JI KA BEGHUM. It is said that 20 years back there six partners was doing farming here this area was till rai family but five partners out of six sold this area and also they built their own houses here.

Six partners are :

[names removed]

-- didn't sold own land still using for agriculture having an ancient well which is known as CHOWK IN TARA means there are four room channel into the well.

## PATHAWARI

Pathawari is a little temple of goddess Durga. People come here for worship. They celebrate festival nine days of goddess Durga and each Monday women sing devotional songs and play the drums. After marriage ladies bring DULHAN for worship. Nobody do aarti here. [name removed] is a lady, she look after this temple. She does cleaning, worship everyday. She washes the clothes of goddess Durga within a week. During festival or events time she organizes a little Bhandara. Some another people also participate in these events.

Kushwah people (LAXMI NARAYAN MANDIR)

Kushwah people mostly live in Deewan ji ka mohalla into taj ganj area and all of them involve in making garlands with flowers. Kushwah known for RAJA NAL during the time of lord Rama. RAJA NAL AND NIEL supported to lord RAMA to make bridge into see. Letter on so many kings of Kushwah happened here like RAJA MAAN SINGH, Raja jay Singh but originally this Kushwah cast comes from RAJA NAL. Deewan ji ka mohalla having mostly Kushwah (Hindus families). These Kushwah families having a temple at bank of the river Yamuna near crematory call as SHAMSHANGHAT which is older than tajmahal of Hindus communities. This temple known as LAXMI NARAYAN MANDIR which having a samitee

of Kushwah people. This samitee do a YATRA after six days of Holi festival which is color festival and this yare known as Holi Milan samaroh with statue of gods. Mostly people join this yatra from 18 slums in Agra. This manidir is very old at bank of the river Yamuna. This temple during the time of Jaipur's king RAJA JAISINGH has been built. His relatives built this temple. It is said that Agra and Mathura was covered by some gardens like agarvan and vrindhavan. That time this temple built but nobody was here to take care of this temple. So GWALE and other people organize a samitee. From so many years back people are doing this yatra with statue of God. This samitee take care this temple. In that time members were also from Mathura and vrindhavan. Every three year

this samitee has been changed. Now we are having this samitee but on 25 of May election will be happen may be some more members change. Now all the members are from in Agra only. Details of this group.

KUSHWAH SAMAJ YATRA comity members

[ten names and contact details removed]

Some are the supporter as they also doing support to mandir samiti to do collection and development of the temple. At this mandir so many priest has been changed here:-

Raghudas pass 35 years

Mahant ji 40 years

Gyan singh 8 years.

- In this comity there are 15 member
- Every 3 years they do vote to change the members and members position
- Eight year before temple having jungle and no proper plan to make garden. It means no development was here.
- There was nothing here people afraid for coming here but eight years back so many people with their animals started to come here and they started to use this area to sit and sleep. Slowly some another people also started to come from near area and started to do:

1. Plantation
2. Cleaning
3. Toilets water sub- marsible
4. New more small temple
5. Putting tiles on the Flore
6. Arrange a person as he can stay here properly and give him food.
7. Arrange the priest here forever
8. Decoration
9. sitting arrangement for tourist
10. providing the area to cook food for tourist

This samity every year does collection according the event and festival so that fund goes to development in the temple so now we can see

proper garden proper temple. This samiti also celebrate here some another event also according their tradition like

- Hanuman jayanti
- Krishna jayanti
- Holimilan
- Ankut bitran

This yatra is going from harjupura to laxmi narayan temple and covering these slums. Through these slums also people joined by taking their SAWARIES.

- Harju pura
- M.p.pura

- Shahjahan gardens
- Malkogali
- Kataras
- South gate of Taj
- West gate of taj
- Shamshan ghat
- Kaal bhairon temple
- Laxminarayan temple

#### CHAUWK CHAND TARA

Indra chowk chand tara known by the name of well which having four chanel used to supply the water for taj mahal and around this slums having 5 well so in Mughals time this area known for PANCHGANI WELLS but also santkari people living

here so this area also known for SANTRASHI but during the Indira Gandhi time this area known as Indira chowk chand tara. In this area sikarwar samaj is living total houses is about 60 - 70.

Sikarwar samar belong to maharana pratap they are not celebrating Raksha bandan festival because that day maharana pratap died. all the people are doing the work loubor santrashi mistri etc.

In this slums having a temple known as sikarwar samaj temple its 200 years old and as its having carving its from that time its done by local people here. Its having two committees one is youth group members is:

[six names removed]

Dashrath - in this group they are 21 members. its a youth group for doing and celebration on this temple . they are all doing carving stone and putting tiles on the flor of building they do aarti here morning at 8am and evening 8 pm.

Chandtara slum is in two streets only. Second group of elders which is having 8 mambers which is regestered by delhi . They also having an office in shahganj this group do peaceful activities for their community, caring of temple, cleaning this area, during fighting time make decision.

## ABOUT TAJGANJ AREA

We did discussion with so many people to finding out about the particular slums and about history. We did mapping of the deewan ji ka mohalla and Billochpura and ask on the tourism based with so many families that what we can show to the tourist in slums locally we find so many things like

1. Old wells
2. Old houses
3. Lodhi temple
4. Some graves
5. Mosque
6. Ghummath( tomb)
7. Traditional work

8. Zardozi
9. Carpet
10. Making garlands
11. Marvels work
12. Schools
13. Kite making
14. Temples

This idea given by:

[seven names removed]

Marble workshops in Billochpura

Billochpura is a settlement in Tajganj known for the billochies who was making weapons

for MUGHAL's EMPEROR to use in battle. they were from Billochisthan. Shahjahan (5th mughal emperor) during the battle with his brother bring them here and settled down here and his area started call as Billochpura but by passing the time these people started to do another work after mughal's people having camels for carrying heavy load and they pet them and used to sell and during the British time so many people were big merchants of shoes they were going Ajmer to supply their shoes. people as they settle down here to make THE TAJMAHAL they were making parts for TAJMAHAL they were needed to have some help of another people so they call from nearby so by watching them people have learn one skill to make the part of TAJMAHAL with inlay so we

can find here also people do Marvel inlay work. In Billochpura there are 34 workshops they all do the work for big shops and showrooms.

these workshop run by thekedar (middlemen) thekedar take order from big shops and showrooms to make marvel product with inlay or another work and given to articiants (labour) they are from nearly. Thekedar purchase the stone from so many states but main state to take any kind of the stones from Makarana. Makarana basically is a mountain so makarana is main source to get stone but people can also take deferent kind of stone from different states like

- local Agra



1. Purani mandi for white stone
2. Nai ki mandi for colorful stone

- Out of Agra

1. Jaipur for colorful stone and white also
2. Makarana for colorful stone and white stone also
3. Delhi for white stone
4. Udaipur for white stone
5. Mumbai for white stone
6. Madras for white stone
7. Surat for white stone
8. Panjab for white stone

People from Billochpura doing the work these kind

of big showroom and big shops like

Showrooms

Big shops

Saga Bazaar

Akabar Nandulal

Kalakriti Sarif bhai

Abhinash

Kailash

Oswal

Fulchand

Some people as they are doing marble inlay work

list is given below:-

[five names removed]

Costing of coaster

To making coaster the material cost is -200rs

Labour 150 each

Middlemen 80 each with material

Showrooms and big shop 350- 1000 each

Finally tourist has to pay about 1200rupee for one coaster set.

Costing of box

To making marble box material cost is -350rs

Labour 180each

Middlemen 110 each with material

Showrooms and big shops 1000-2000 each

Finally tourists have to pay about 2000 rupee for one marble box.

KABRISTHAN

Billochpura slum having a grave yard (kabristhaan) it's older one during the mughal's time people as they were living and during fighting time when they became died worried here. This graveyard is older than the TAJMAHAL because now it's having some graves these are 800-900 years old.

On those graves having stone on those stone having writing note so can be identify. This graveyard having a kabristhan samitee which

is look after of this grave yard. This kabristhan samitee take the land of kabristhan for the dead body. The new area of the slum which is known as kacchi colony its all developed on the land of kabristhan. Actually 8years before, this new area was constructed in the land of kabristhan so people from billochpura as they were look after of the SHAHI MOSQUE decided to save the kabristhan they are billow down

[seven names removed]

8years back -- was selling the area. to stop him and others people they went to waqf board and made a plan to save the land of kabristhan and did boundery by making group (samitee).

Samitee went to MLA to show them some problem relatives to kabristhan and told people around this kabristhan are doing encroachment and making houses so he release the fund about 5lac rupees some amount collected by samitee also.

Every samitee having some work this samitee specific know for look after of kabristhan like

- To save the land from people as they are doing encroachments.
- For look after the people as they are trying to broken the boundary wall.
- Cleaning the grave yard during the festival time
- Doing whitewash around boundary wall
- Doing color on the gate.

- Doing collection for event celebration during festival times.
- Repair some times when it's broken.
- Provide a person who digging the grave.
- Samitee issue a receipt for every died bodies.
- Look after people that they are same one or not as their families bring died bodies.
- Look after the graves any animal digging out or not.
- Paying proper attention to keep in touch with takiyedar who also take care graveyard.
- Kids play cricket so some time stone of graves use by kids. Etc

People carry died bodies in this kabristhan from some slums of Tajganj. There are some families fixed who can carry died bodies to worried in this kabristhan which families members are carrying died bodies from so longer time. People carry died bodies from these slums like Gudihai, Malko gali, Aap ka mazar, Resham katra, Seva ram gali(baghichi), Patiram ki baghichi, telipada, Abbas nagar, gauber chaowki and Billochpura.

This samittee seems that some plan for this kabristhan should be happen to developed this kabristhan.

1. To have 2 room to stand people
2. Lighting around graveyard.

3. One room for Gorkhand(who digging out the graves for died bodies)
4. Both side gates as it having near billochpura slums.
5. Plantation around graveyard
6. Water arrangement.

Have find out some local graves as it's also important around this area and people celebrate URSE of those person as they worried over there. These graves know as

#### 1 ALAMSHAH BABA

Urs - Nov-dec (17-18) Safar-chelam muslims month

He was from Iran. He was priest for Mughal soldier. He gave treatment to the people for natural power. He was not living at one point for long time. Whatever a place he used, he gave medicine for people around that area and he putted SAMADHI. He became died here so the servant buried here.

#### 2 LAGANSHAH BABA

Urs - Chelam- 17

After Mughal dynasty (BAHADURSHAH JAFAR) he was head pradhan of Billochpura. In his time there was a person he was living here on rent near ALAMSHAH BABA. He was having TABUZ. Muslims

have faith that it is a symbol of ALI'S grave. He started to live in Malko gali near mosque. People from Malko gali having big knife known as TALWAR and he died so TABUZ also there. When the people tried to took it back in there village but the people was not ready to given back they had fight each other so people from Malko gali closed the door south gate of TAJ. People from Billochpura having problem to get eating food so LAGANSHAH BABA attacked them and opened door for people and tried to get TABUZ back but he was not able to get it back. He was so injured in that fighting so people from Billochpura bring him in their village, after few days LAGANSHAH BABA became died people buried him near PIELLU TREES still now having PIELLU TREE. Now this area

famous for PIELLU TREE. People from Billochpura put a rally during MOHARAM festival with TAZIYA time through Malkogali to put their TAZIYA in the memory of LAGANSHAH BABA and put DANGAL do TALWAR BAZI. People from every slum gathered here to see DANGAL between MALKO GALI AND BILLOCHPURA this area become croudly like a fair.

3 KHAKHISHAH BABA

Urs - 17-18 SAFAR

He was priest called fakir who have great faith in god lived here. He was also doing treatment of natural power.

#### 4 MAMU-BHANJHA

Urs - 12 MOHARAM

They were two brothers living together near KHAKHISHAH BABA. They learnt from KHAKHISHAH BABA the skill to give treatment of natural power. They were priest called fakir who have great faith in god lived here. He was also doing treatment of natural power.

#### 5 ALAM SAHID

Urs - 17 RAJAB

At Billochpura tila He was priest called fakir who have great faith in god lived here. He was also doing treatment of natural power.

#### 6 GANSHAHIDA BABA

Urs - 14-15 VAFAT 12

In kabristhan in the middle of other graves now having so many acacia plants. He was priest called fakir who have great faith in god lived here. He was also doing treatment of natural power.

## Tour Animators / Consistent Collaborators November 2014

If you go into the village areas, there people celebrate all the festivals. But nowadays inside the slums as we can see only a few members celebrate festivals or the religious activities

*Why do you think that is?*

There are two or three reasons: the first is security. They are just going to their Holi festival, putting the colours and all that, and what happens? The colours can go into the eyes, and people are having breathing problems. So people are not celebrating these kind of things politely.

*Right – as in celebrating these things could cause offense, so not celebrating them can be the polite*

*thing to do - the only way that so many people can live in such close proximity and not fall out.*

Nowadays the population is increasing, so the trees and open spaces are being taken away. So to celebrate festivals, take the vegetables and do these activities is happening less.

*The 'intangible heritage' can't survive without its setting.*

Inside the museum we need to find the local crafts and then we can put [these on display]. I've been asking people what is your heritage? And I've been explaining that this is not only the monuments, but culture and religious activities, festivals. And



to think about what things are being lost and how we can protect them and highlight them.

*What about places for non-religious gatherings?*

We have one community around the Poule Mandi [flower market] but people are no longer taking their flowers to sell at that particular poule mandi [referring to the temple chowk]. The reason is that in the past there was a committee of ten to twelve members and they would get something [payment] – something to improve the community spaces. But what has happened is that the agents, or middlemen have started to use their own properties [for selling flowers]. People come to their property. But if nobody invests in the

community spaces, what happens? Nobody will come to use it.

One more thing – people have jealousy. People see someone and they see that he is using a particular space to earn [money]. So next month other community members say that they want to use this property. So they will quarrel.

*Land is now so scarce that it is perceived as an economic opportunity – and in a slum you'd be crazy not to take that opportunity.*

30 to 40 years back you did not need to earn so much. People have so many family members, and material is now such a high cost. And a person's

salary is not enough to support their family.

*Is this because people have higher expectations of what they can achieve - people no longer necessarily expect to do the same job as their father did?*

Yes, now If they are investing their time in something, they want to be earning money. So they will think if we are talking to more and more people, then we invest more and more time, and we will get nothing. So this is another thing [about the decline in commitment to civic activity, religious activity] people are not talking to each other as much.

*Has that had any consequences?*

There's no coordination between people. In using community spaces, people are unable to have a proper discussion about how to use it. So if you get permission to do something [host an event] in the space, then yes you can do it. But people only find out about it weeks later, and are annoyed that they were not involved.

## Teenage Youth Group (male) April 2013

Interview with teenagers in the Flower Market,  
Diwan ji Mohalla 13th April 2013

One man answers most of the questions after consulting with the group. Born here in Diwan ji Mohalla, he is a student in 9th class (14 years old).

*What do you think of DkM?*

It is good living here, I like it. I don't make flower garlands but most of the young people in this village work in garland making which they do at home, so there are always people around.

*What do young people do together in the village?*

Games - cricket, gilli ganda (flick wood sticks), panch (fives).

*Who joins in these games?*

Neighbours only.

*Who 'hangs out' where?*

Old people hang out in the temple courtyards, maybe in the graveyard too. Or the flower market square after the market has closed. They have set places where they go to meet, sit and sleep. Shady places.

Young people have no fixed meeting places. They

stay in their own village area, boys maybe walk around their village area together or play games somewhere. The most fun times where people meet up are religious festivals and weddings, especially the kela devi pilgrimage where you go overnight and it is 200km away. We often also go to the Shakti Mandir in the neighbourhood. That is the most fun time of the week.

People have fun hanging out across generations and ages but not across gender. It would be very rare for young people to gather and have fun without other generations. There are some really old ladies that hang out with the boys, play games with them at festivals - that would really be the only instance of hanging out across genders.

*Do girls spend time in outside spaces?*

Girls hang out together indoors - they do indoor games. They also occasionally will go on shopping trips together with older ladies, and go to organised religious events and festivals. They often go to the temple together for worship.

Mostly people do their shopping in the bazaar running past the Kali Masjid [heritage walk road]. Big shopping for a wedding, something rare would be done in the bazaars around the Jama Masjid in the Old City. Sadaar bazaar for sports equipment. There really is hardly ever a need to go out onto the Fatehabad Road except to catch a bus perhaps. But usually people will travel by motorbike.

Shopping is done in single gender groups.

*Who gets involved in local politics?*

Local politics is a part time activity for some of the teenage boys. It is just for boys, although there are some old ladies that get involved. The different party groups have meetings in people's houses and during election time (for ward councillor), some of the boys will canvas with leaflets full time for several days.

*Do people get together for other reasons, maybe the wedding bands get together to practice?*

People do not meet up to practice singing and

music. People might practice with other relatives in the home. Musical groups then just meet up at the occasion such as a wedding , sit down and play.

*Which of the following do you wish you had in the village?*

*Shops?* Yes we wish we had computer games shops and sports equipment shops.

*Gym?* No we have a gym. Do girls go? No.

*Cinema?* (unenthusiastic)

*Park?* Yes! A park to play games would be the best thing. We miss a park.

*restaurants/McDonalds* (unenthusiastic)

*mall?* (unenthusiastic)

*garden?* Yes a park or garden, and also a computer

centre to go on the internet would be very good.

*Another young man chips in -* Yes a park! There is no open space to play games. We prefer to play games than to do educated activities, and there is nowhere for this.

*The boys sit and listen to music on mobile phones, while in the temple chowk across the street women are gathering for worship and also buying sweets from a street vendor.*

## **Raj Mistry, April 2013**

10.04.2013 Interview with the Raj Mistry

Translators: Lekhraj Nishad and Monty Singh

*Has this always been a place where Raj Mistry lived?*

Paaktola has always been home to Raj Mistry. These hills were used for making bricks for the Taj Mahal and so there were Raj Mistry here. This site (indicates) was a well where water was drawn to make mortars.

*How many people here are raj mistry?*

Points to 6 people in the group of 9.

*Is it still a popular career choice? Passed down to sons? How do people learn the trade?*

No it is not very popular with young people any more. One of my sons is a Raj Mistry, not all of my sons. People learn the trade on site. If I am working on a site sometimes young masons or unskilled labourers take an interest in what I am doing and then they learn from me during that project.

*What is the institution of employment? How do contractors hear about you? When do they use you?*

Contractors employ us on projects where are

specialist skills are needed. They know me because of other projects I have worked on for them, that's how it works. There is no list of Raj Mistry or formal union. Especially contractors that do a lot of work on monuments and old buildings will know some Raj Mistry and employ them for those projects and also projects of high architectural quality. For example right now I am working on the Jalma Institute [leprosy research centre].

*What is the history of the raj mistry doing the design for the building? And now? Where do the building ideas come from? Do you get inspiration from places far away? magazines etc?*

Traditionally someone would come to you with

a site - a plot. And they would know that they wanted a house or another kind of building. There was no designer, we would decide what would be done and base the proportions on the size of the plot, and what we had done successfully on buildings before that. Usually we would go with the client to a previous house worked on nearby and discuss what we would repeat, or they might show us a house that they liked.

We did not draw inspiration from buildings outside of Agra, magazines etc. We drew inspiration from the buildings that we had built in Agra.

Now the projects we work on (like the Jalma) have an architect, we don't do the design. And lots of



houses built use architects too.

*What was the thinking behind measurement?*

*Brick size?*

We would go between the plot size and then the units of measurement that we work with - the kaj.

*What was the drawing process if any?*

I would do one initial sketch drawing of how it would be. That was it, then we would build it how we knew.

*How does a large institution like the taj mahal select raj mistry?*

They have a particular contractor that they select. The contractor then chooses who they employ to do the work, including the Raj Mistry.

*How local is the craft?*

It's very local, we don't work outside Agra, and other Raj Mistrys don't work in Agra.

*Were the colonial buildings here raj mistry designed?*

Some, but actually that was a time when people also used architects for their houses. Before and since people use architects less for house designs.

*When did the larger bricks replace the smaller ones?*

We don't know.

## Notes made during meeting at INTACH, November 2012

Meetings at Intach Delhi, 2012 11 09

Ancient Monuments, Sites and Remains Act amended 2010: 100m prohibited zone (no new construction, infrastructure, sewers etc), and then 200m regulated zone. Each state has a list of the monuments in their jurisdiction, and is responsible for enforcing this act. At a third, smaller level, Urban Local Bodies can set up heritage regulations under the Town and Country Planning Act. Using this act, cities can protect areas of special interest, and frame heritage regulations (and there is a model/template for these on the Intach website. Agra/UP has not taken it on though).

In Nov 2011 an agency was created called the

National Monuments Authority, which are supposed to monitor these zones much more strictly with the help of new bylaws. [There was a meeting of the board of the NMA at Intach while we were speaking]. So far, 47 monuments have been tested by drawing up bylaws. The time consuming bit is getting an official OS map of the monument and context, because anything else could be contested in court by developers. The tester monuments in Delhi have been selected for immediate bylaws because the state wanted to contest the current regulated zone restrictions in order to build a) new court buildings b) an underground carpark.

Bylaws are created individually for each

monument. Over the next year, Intach will draw up bylaws for each ASI listed monument (around 4000 in total). The bylaws look at the context of each monument, divide the context into zones, and then set a rule for each zone (so if in one zone there are already 30m high buildings, the bylaw might say building height maximum 30m in this zone). The bylaws cannot do much for the prohibited zones, just the regulated zones, unfortunately.

The formulators of this Act of Parliament did not want to design in flexibility, favouring a 'one size fits all' policy that is easier to enforce. However, they did (unprecedentedly, I think), ask Intach to draw up the bylaws this time.

*Me: What would you ideally like to see happen to houses like the 'heritage houses' in Tajganj?*

- would like to see them used as houses, as this is what they were built for. A lot of houses were built around the Taj for the builders of the Taj. The historic link to the heritage of building the Taj should be maintained. If the area becomes extremely touristy (tourist ghetto), this heritage link could be lost.

The ASI/Central Government have, for now, stopped listing monuments. They can't even protect the 4000 that they have listed already. However, State Departments are being encouraged to get involved in protecting extra monuments.

Intach Agra, for example, made a list of lesser known monuments, which was the basis of Lucy Peck's book. However, nothing yet has been implemented in relation to these lesser known monuments, but it is hoped something will be done. This will be up to the local ASI branches to sort out.

So conservation rules are monument (or occasionally precinct) based (and very specifically around each individual monument/precinct, rather than general principles) not area based, or city based. Heritage is not feeding into planning (principles, or masterplans), very well at all. Delhi Municipality is a bit interested, Agra not interested.

Summary - the listing laws are formed in a way that can be as easily enforced as possible. A book of guidelines or principles, generally, or for a particular type of building, are considered to be useless because there is not a desire amongst people and constructors for this, and it certainly can't be enforced without people being 'onside' -

- there are very few local interest groups, except the local chapters of Intach (which is a very good start). The authorities can't even enforce anti-demolition rules on monuments (unless there is excellent proof that the building was there, and then it was actively demolished - Delhi officially has 174 monuments. In actual fact it has 163 at this moment in time). The only thing they can do is

refuse planning applications.

Notes: The first Heritage Walk was Mehrauli in Delhi. The first recognised to be successful was Ahmedabad, but now Mehrauli also v successful. Helped to get the monuments on that walk listed.

- felt that it would be a great thing for other government departments such as tourism to become more involved with heritage - anyone who will take notice, and give a value/show that certain buildings have value would be a good thing, because citizens are not particularly bothered, and the ASI doesn't have the resources to police demolitions/bad alterations etc.

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Intach looking at how to clean up the country's naalas [open drains]. In Delhi, (in particular, Palam Drain in Dwarka), Intach have been piloting a Bioremediation Process (which originated in the US), where 'good' bacteria are added to the water. Results are apparent within ten days, when the foul smell subsides. In more time, the water (including the subsequent recharged groundwater), appears cleaner and is reportedly safer too.

Reportedly, Agra had not shown interest in using bioremediation in its Naalas because they wanted to implement schemes that paid out much larger

sums to construction industry (for 'kick-backs').  
Bioremediation was too simple and cheap (to reap benefits). This is just an opinion that some people have.

There has been lots of resistance to the heritage bylaws because people felt that the government was putting monuments before people.

However, there is such a thing as TDR: Transfer Development Rights.

"You need alert citizenry and committed authorities" to have effective conservation regulations.

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Currently Agra Municipality is not pro-heritage. Heritage is not on Agra's agenda, in the way that it is in Delhi.

Even though there are a lot of very strict regulations in place in relation to historic buildings, buildings are being lost because in the city land is far more (commercially) valuable than a historic building. The land owners need a very good reason to keep and protect this building, and unless they have an incredible interest in architecture, and are prepared to lose out on a huge amount of money for this cause, they're not going to keep it. The ASI do not have the

resources to check up on monuments, and even if they did, most of them haven't been officially surveyed etc so it would be hard to make a formal case against the landowner once the building had been damaged or lost. In England, it is the "active citizenry" - local interest groups, neighbours, academics, that alert authorities when damage is done, and this is a very necessary part of the system. It is lacking in Agra, so the rules are hard to enforce.

In short, it is very hard to enforce rules that stop damage to existing monuments, but much easier to enforce rules about new building, (if they are simple), because applications for new building are made to the city/state and can be refused. This is

why the rules affecting regulated zones around monuments are so simple - so that they can be enforced with minimal resources. For example, if there is to be no building above 3.5m around the monument, this is very easy to spot with a simple visit to the area, owners asked to remove additions. As soon as the rules become flexible, open to interpretation, it would be impossible to enforce the rules with so little manpower.

The rules are so strict because the ASI do not trust citizens to treat listed buildings responsibly. The rules are being broken because the value of monuments to citizens appears to be quite low. The rules are hard to enforce because there is not a community interest in significant



buildings/no local interest groups etc. Ultimately, although these monument systems seems to be very focused on law enforcement, ultimately the power lies with citizens, and because the ASI is so overstretched, is not interested in looking at expanding what it protects at this moment in time, any unlisted significant buildings are most definitely in the hands of the community and their owners.

Intach has set up local branches - this is the first step towards local interest groups.

Unless India loses many monuments, (like England did in WW2), Indians will not appreciate historic and significant buildings.

How could people be moved to want to protect monuments? Making money from them? (short term) Tourism? (medium term) Education? (long term).

#### The Bylaws

Central government decided that bylaws were necessary, (decision was unanimous), and asked Intach to frame them. They are asking for a stronger enforcement of the laws than ever before. They are now beginning to implement the bylaws. 40 monuments have had bylaws written for them at this moment. Two in Delhi, none in Agra.

Bylaws essentially take an official OS of the monument and its context (prohibited zone, regulated zone, and a bit around that too). They determine once and for all where the boundaries of the prohibited and regulated zones are. Instead of applying one set of strict rules to everything inside these zones, they divide these two rings into further zones. So if part of the regulated ring was residential, this might be one zone, and given a 3.5m height limit. If some of the regulated ring was a park, a 'no build' rule might be given to this bit. If another part had skyscrapers, the highest skyscraper would be used as the height limit for this zone. Each monument bylaw is a small booklet showing lines of site from the monument etc. I am shown the bylaws drawn up for Shershah Gate and

Khaurul Manazil Mosque, Delhi.

Unfortunately no changes are allowed to be made to the rules governing the 100m prohibited zone.

## Notes made during meeting with members of ASI Agra Circle

Minutes of Meeting with ASI Agra Circle

ASI Office, The Mall, Agra, 29th November, 2013

1.0 Introductions, RO outlines her PhD topic

1.1 *The main problem is the encroachment of [Tajganj residents]<sup>1</sup> - so who is going to take that on? Who is going to make that their business? Nobody.*

1.2 RO asked about any recent changes (since the notification in the Gazette of India on the 23rd August 2011) in regulations within 100m and 300m zones, as the National Monuments Committee

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1. Author has replaced original phrase

is starting to draft complex sets of bylaws for monument zones in other cities such as Delhi.

*These 2011 rules were the ones to be adhered to and gave RO a printed copy of these.*

1.3 *Permission for repairs within 100m zone have to be granted and no permission would be granted for any reconstruction, restoration or new construction.*

1.4 RO asked where the line was between repair and restoration, or the line between repair and construction, whether there was a written document making this clear.

*Refer back to the 2011 Gazette notification for this. Also the published book containing the 1958 AMASR Act.*

*1.5 The eventual plan is for the 100m zone around the monuments to be 'clean' so it is preferred for buildings within this zone to fall down or be demolished so that this area could become a 'garden' owned and controlled by the ASI itself.*

1.6 RO described a hypothetical scenario where a family living in the 100m zone had a historically significant house that was falling down and was dangerous. They couldn't afford to repair the building in the way that ASI required to grant permission to make repairs. What should they do?

*There is no government assistance for these kinds of buildings, even if they present a hazard to public safety, the family's best choice is to 'shift' and allow the building to be demolished or fall down.*

1.7 RO asked whether there were any regulations about demolition.

*There are no rules about demolition - demolition is fine in the 100m zone but rebuilding once demolition has taken place would not be allowed, the plot would have to remain empty.*

1.8 -- described some basic 'traditional' repair techniques including lime-surkhee plaster mix. Said

that surkhee was hard to get hold of now that the brick factories have moved out of the city.

RO asked how long ago the current standard sized bricks started to be used in Agra.

*This is unknown, but perhaps 40 or 60 years back.*

RO asked where the lahori bricks used in the restoration/repair of ASI monuments came from.

*There were plenty of these bricks collected from the demolition of unlisted historic buildings. Lahori bricks last much longer than the current standard brick - approximately 150 years longer.*

1.9 RO asked whether the ASI ever sanctioned methods using conjectural restoration (as INTACH supports) when they did not know exactly how a building used to look.

*The ASI does not support this and when they can't find documentation or evidence they leave the artifact in a minimally repaired ruinous state. ASI Agra still refer to Sir John Marshall's conservation rules where 'matching to the 'original'' was aimed for and ideally the viewer would not be able to see the difference or joins between old and new.*

2.0 RO asked whether ASI Agra had any guidance or thoughts about the treatment of historically significant public urban spaces. [no comment]



## Chai Store Meeting with ‘Heritage House’ Owners, November 2012

Community Meeting 1: Owners of “Heritage Houses” in Bilochpura, Tajganj.

Present:

- Rachel O’Grady (asking questions)
- Rhada Mahon, CURE (translator)
- Muhammed
- Maulvi
- Sulemann
- Rajid

*Do you like living in such old houses?*

We like it very much. We love living in these old houses. However, we are constantly afraid that

they will fall down!

*Why? Are they too difficult to repair, or too expensive to repair?*

Firstly, old buildings are very expensive to repair, compared to how cheap it is to construct something new. Even if the money is there, there is nobody available to repair in the same style - these skills are now hard to come by.

*(Directed at owner of the most ruined house): why don’t you make additions and repairs in a new style, if these craftsmen can’t be found, rather than letting the house go to ruin?*

If you have the space, it is easier and cheaper to build new rooms than repair existing old rooms.

*If you heard that there was a scheme giving grants for the repair of old buildings, would you apply for it? Or would you be worried to register in case it alerted authorities to the fact that you owned a heritage building, and they might apply restrictions?*

A scheme like this would be very good, but we would never hear about it, and even if we did, it would be impossible to access these funds - it is always impossible to access funding schemes like this from the government.

*What is your area's relationship with the ASI?*

We would not get permits for any building here. This is a restricted zone.

*So how have you achieved so much new building?*

We build very slowly. That is the trick.

*You have very beautiful and rare houses. Are there people queueing up to buy them?*

Muhammed: Some tourists did actually ask to buy my house, but I could not see a way to make a profit - I would not want to move from the area, in which case, I would have to buy another house



here, which would be very expensive.

*Tell me about the history of this area.*

Maybe 8 to 10 families do marble inlay. I teach at the Madrasa.

*That's the current situation, but what about the past?*

Radha (tourguide) - this area is historically a sweets bazaar.

Sulemann: my house is 140 years old, and was built by my ancestors. All of our houses [pointing to other Heritage House owners] were built by our

ancestors. There are many important things in our houses that have been passed down to us, and all important occasions, such as weddings, have happened in our houses.

*Would you be sad if your children ended this cycle, and moved to new houses?*

Sulemann: It depends on the situation at that time. I don't mind - I will be dead!



## Well Repair Workshop, December 2012

The design of old monuments should not be changed. We should not alter the original design of heritage buildings. That will be good for the society.

-Mo. Jaheer Pahalwan (Billochpura, Tajganj)

Every old building is very beautiful in Agra. It is our knowledge of the history.

-Rajendra Prasad Tiwari (Paktola, Tajganj)

We should not change the old design and old arts.

-Sameena (Telipada)

We want live here forever because our ancestors have given us this heritage.

-Saroj/Parveen (Telipada)

During the meeting, we discussed about the old building. I don't have heritage house, still I like to see them.

-Pushpa/Munni/Rajiya(Tlipada)

In this meeting CURE a local NGO discuss with the people about the historical buildings. The all historic building should be renovated and we community people are with this initiative.

-Shumayla (Billochpura)

