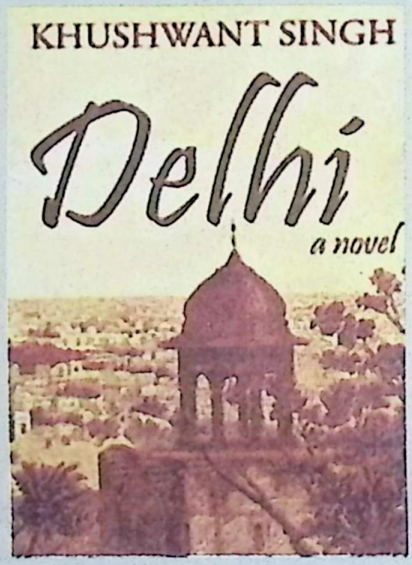
Book Review

Delhi

Sabrina F Ahmad

THE history of this Subcontinent during the Mughal rule is a fascinating one indeed for any history buff worth her salt. From Timurlane's bloody invasions to the romance of Shah Jahan, these egocentric but aesthetic despots have shaped the land and its people in many different ways, be it by establishing Islam or waging war, patronising culture or leaving a hundred architectural wonders in their wake. At the heart of their Empire lay Delhi, the City of Kings.

Khushwant Singh pays tribute to this city that's so close to his heart, in a shockingly irreverent, but irrepressibly frank and funny way in his book titled *Delhi*. An epistolary history, the story is told through a number of different perspectives, through the voices of many narrators, the principal one being an ageing reprobate who enjoys a love-hate relationship with the city, a relationship he compares to the unorthodox affair he



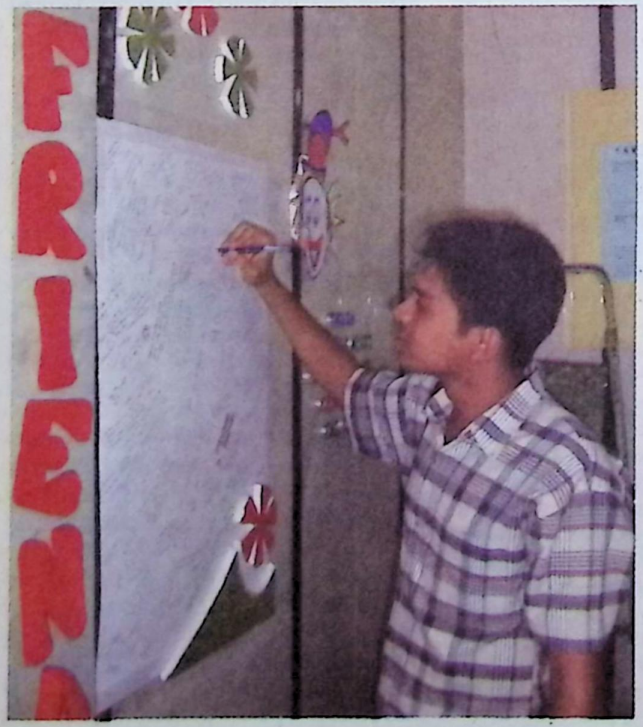
carries out with Bhagmati, his hermaprodhite mistress.

Appearing in the form first-person accounts, the novel recounts the history of India from the time of Timurlane's invasions, through the rise and fall of the Mughal Empire, through the British Raj, and ending with Indira Gandhi in 1984. The author puts himself in the shoes of Timur the Terrible, trying to justify his conquests, then a young Hindu who converted to Sikhism during the Muslim invasions prior to the establishment of Mughal rule, as a poet in Akbar's court, as Aurangzeb imprisoning his father Shah Jahan. The different accounts are neatly tied together by the Sikh narrator as he contemplates his illicit passion for his strange love.

The book is bawdy, graphic, and yet fascinating in its historical accounts. Singh shows a remarkable talent for empathy as he recreates each character, adopting his/her attitudes, modes of speech, and more. There are sections where the story lapses into seemingly pointless description of a character's sexual conquests or bowel movements, but for the most part, it is a riveting read and puts quite an interesting spin on history.

The book is available at Etc and Boi Bichitra for around Tk 5-600.

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Friendship Day

Tayan Nazir

EAST West University generates an interesting and innovative idea of celebrating the Friendship Day which comes once in a year on 1st Sunday of the month of August. A sheet of paper like canvas is hung on a wall and the students who have a jolly mind come and give their signature on the sheet and take part in the celebration.

On this day we forget who is senior or who is junior. Even some of our teachers come forward and give their signature on the canvas. By the evening the canvas looks very colourful. Students look forward to this day with eagerness and think if it only came more than once!.