

A Taste of Delhi

'Delhi hai Dilwale ki' is what we were trying to understand when we stepped off in Delhi on 27 June, 2017 after two consecutive flights on the US-Bangla Air and Indigo. During a brief Eid vacation, Delhi was a sudden tour on our part, by the grace of the Almighty, due to an unexpected strike in Darjeeling.

We were, in fact, brought up on the popular proverbs like 'Delhi ka laddu', 'Dilli koto dur' (how far is Delhi) etc. from people all around us. It turned out to be a hectic trip for the very beginning, right from the flights and until we got back to base, but it was also equally enjoyable in many ways.

I was eager to compare the capital of India with that of Bangladesh during our five-day visit to Delhi, as well as Agra and Kolkata. The days were hot and we were three in number. The media craze has created an impression among us that India is a nice country, and so are its people. But I realised the situation is different as I toured the streets of Delhi. It is not much different from our beloved Dhaka, esp. the road side views. Both the rich and poor coexist in New Delhi, famous for the important administrative offices of the Indian government.

The first thing that attracted me here is the metro rail that we heard a lot about; second, the discipline and neatness with greenery. The local government's sincere efforts to keeping the city neat and clean can be a good lesson for our City Corporation authorities.

The cuisine in Delhi, especially the vegetarian options are simply delicious. We tasted different vegetarian dishes at different times, but the breakfast at Hotel Gulnar will remain unforgettable. The spices used may enchant you forever and my guess is their food is cheaper and healthier in comparison to ours. Interestingly, Indians prefer veg to non-veg menus, unlike Bangladeshis. They like to take flatbread (roti), vegetables, dal and yogurt in their regular meals. We tried out several restaurants where we discovered that the local people also like a variety of dairy items with their meals.

From the very beginning of our tour, the taxi drivers acted as our local guides. I was having a bit of trouble communicating with them in Hindi but my companions came to the rescue, thanks to the Indian channels and films they watch.

Interestingly, sometimes you need to communicate in Hindi even in Kolkata as the people don't necessarily belong to the place where they live at the moment, just like Dhaka, where people from all over Bangladesh reside.

Entry to the popular tourist destinations also requires a hefty admission fee. An Indian, for example, may have to pay Rs 30 to enter while it is Rs 530-Rs 700

for foreigners. I believe the rates should surely be considered for visitors from the other SAARC nations.

Needless to mention, it is not possible to cover both New and Old Delhi within a day. From dawn to dusk, we were fortunate enough to move around the Indian Parliament, Presidential Palace, India Gate, Humayun's Tomb, Qutub Minar, Delhi Fort, Delhi Jama Masjid, and the adjacent market. The architectural designs of the historical places and monuments reflect the minds and taste for splendour favoured by the famous Mughals and their predecessor that ruled ancient India, all the way here from their original homes in Persia and its sur-



rounding regions. These rulers, well-known in history, showed a great fascination for marvellous Islamic calligraphy that you will also notice in other famous establishments in India, including the majestic Taj Mahal. When the Mughals governed India at different periods, they constructed buildings, palaces, forts etc. of all over India, and these still attract tourists even after hundreds of years.

Even though we visited India during the hot summer months, the monsoon rains came in the afternoon and cooled down the hot, sultry days.

It is true that a tourist will soon turn into a student of history if he/she tours the famous sites. Every place has a glorious past that informed us of the Mughals and other renowned rulers of the Indian sub-continent. For children, I believe India is very suitable as a knowledge boosting tourist spot, capable of providing an enriched experience, about all the places that they usually study about in their text books. So it seems appreciable that children get free access to most of the remarkable tour-



ist spots here.

Smart and well-versed tour guides are also available at the tourist spots to narrate the historical significance of the place.

New and Old Delhi are completely different from one another. Old Delhi is like our old town, densely populated and Muslim-centred. The smell of kababs will definitely attract you.

We found a big gathering in Old Delhi during the Eid vacation, especially near the Delhi Jama Masjid and the adjacent market.

Shopping at a new place is another charm of traveling, and since my childhood I have learnt that people love to visit India for shopping; and our business community prefers Kolkata and many other places in India to bring the latest designs for our consumers here.

We however hardly got any time to shop despite knowing that their goods are comparatively cheaper. The charm of shopping in New Delhi is the availability of the latest trends. For middle class shoppers, Old Delhi might be a more suitable option that is full of life!

The beauty of Delhi as a capital can be well-perceived when you leave this city for another part of India. India is a vast country and every state is different from the other. When we left Delhi for Agra on a long drive, we discovered different aspects of this Indian capital. The high-rise buildings that have been constructed out of the city are not apparent within the city as much, which are mostly corporate offices and apartments.

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Photo: Collected

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