

# Investigating Chishti Order Dargah and its Cultural Impact on Delhi During Medieval Period

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**Abstract:** Delhi has long been intertwined with Sufism and its rich cultural traditions. The arrival of Sufis in India during the eleventh century significantly reshaped the city's cultural landscape. Central to Sufi architecture is the *dargah* a shrine constructed over the graves of revered saints which in Delhi often reflects the architectural influences of the Mughal and Sultanate periods. The Sufi tradition has had a profound impact on the cultural heritage of Delhi and its surrounding regions. This qualitative research examines the architectural styles of *dargahs* associated with the Chishti Sufi order in Delhi, particularly those built between the 11th and 14th centuries during the Sultanate period. It also explores the cultural influences and evolution of *dargah* architecture, assessing their role in shaping Delhi's architectural and cultural identity. The findings offer insights and guidelines for preserving the indigenous heritage and cultural legacy of these sacred sites for future generations.

**Keywords:** Sufism, Sufi, Dargah, Sultanate Period, Delhi, Architecture, Indigenous Heritage.

## 1.Introduction

The history of Sufi architecture in Delhi can be traced through the many *dargahs* constructed over different periods. In Sufi belief, death signifies the reunion of the soul with its Creator and the release of the material body, and is therefore regarded as a joyous transition. The lives and teachings of Sufi saints are commemorated annually through celebratory gatherings held on the anniversaries of their passing. The term *dargah* refers to a shrine built in honor of these saints, often reflecting the architectural style of the era in which they lived. Sufism is believed to have arrived in India in the eleventh century. Etymologically, the word *dargah* derives from two Persian words: *dar* meaning "house" and *gah* meaning "time," together signifying "the house of time."

The Chishti order played a central role in shaping the social and cultural life of medieval Delhi, functioning not only as a religious network but also as an agent of urban patronage, ritual performance, and spatial organization. Scholarship on Sufism and Indo-Islamic architecture demonstrates that *dargahs* (saintly shrines) served as hybrid institutions—religious, social, and material—whose influence extended beyond devotional practice into urban form and cultural production (Rizvi, 1983; Nizami, 1961).

## 2.History of Sufism in Delhi

It is difficult to believe that Delhi, the political capital and center of power in India, was revered for a long time as a shrine to famous saints rather than as the home of kings and rulers. Indeed, several empire builders came to this city because of its sacred grounds. The Jain literature contains the earliest known textual mention of Delhi. This is the first instance of the name "Dhillika" appearing. Evidence from Delhi's more than 165 Jain temples attests to the city's long history as a major Jain pilgrimage destination for Jain saints. Dhillika eventually changed its name to Delhi. It is interesting to note that the name Delhi has another origin. Some Muslim Sufi saints decided to establish their base in Delhi when they made their way there. People began associating the word "Dehli" with the 22 Khwajas (Sufi saints) buried in Delhi, or "Dehleez" (Abode). These main Sufi shrines are dispersed among several medieval communities that eventually came together to form modern-day "Delhi. (1. <https://sarmaya.in/spotlight/sufis-dargahs-divinity-in-delhi>, n.d.)

Early treatments of the Chishti presence in northern India emphasize the order’s diffusion through networks of discipleship and royal patronage. Nizam-u’d-Din Auliya and his successors established patterns of spiritual authority that accrued both popular legitimacy and elite recognition; the dargah, as the locus of a saint’s tomb and devotional gatherings, became a long-lasting institution in the metropolitan landscape (Nizami, 1961; Rizvi, 1983). Comparative accounts of Sufi social roles suggest that such networks performed similar welfare and cultural functions across South Asia and other Islamic polities—providing a useful comparative lens for Delhi’s case (Eaton, 2003).

The growth of the Chishti order in India during the Sultanate period occurred in two phases. The first phase ended with the death of Shaikh Nasir Uddin (Chirag-I-Delhi) in 1356 CE. The second phase is marked by its initial decline during the latter part of the 14th century, followed by revival and expansion in various parts of the country during the 15th and 16th centuries.



Figure 1: Growth of Chishti Order in Delhi ; Source : By Author

### 3. Case study of Chishti Sufis Dargah art and architecture in Delhi

1. Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki Dargah
2. (Mehrauli)Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya
3. (Nizamuddin)Shaikh Nasir Uddin Mahmud (Chirag I Delhi)

#### 3.1) Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki Dargah (Mehrauli C. 13th - 14th Cent. CE)

Tomb of Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki

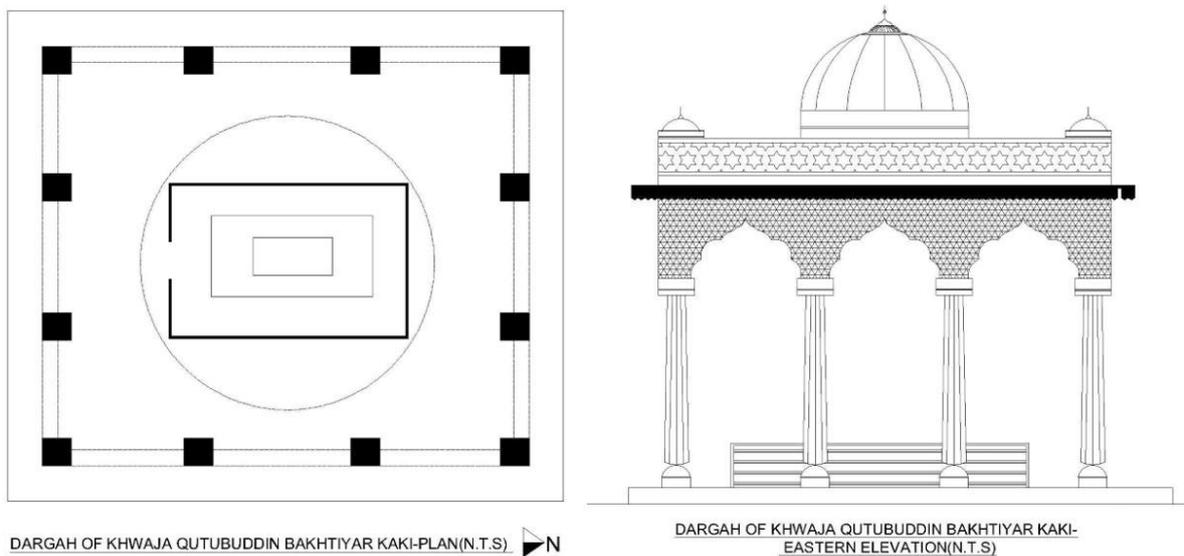


Figure 2: Dargah Plan and Elevation ; Source : <https://nmma.nic.in/nmma/builtDetail.do?refId=11698&dynasty=11>

It lies between the river Yamuna on the East and Delhi Ridge on the West. Delhi Ridge is a Northern extension of ancient Aravalli Range. The Ridge consists of quartzite rocks and extends from the southeast at Tuglaqabad, branching out in places and tapering off in the north near Wazirabad on the west bank of the river Yamuna.

### 3.1.1. Brief History of Saint

Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, a distinguished Muslim Sufi mystic, saint, and scholar of the Chishti order, was honored with the titles *Hazrat Malik-ul-Mashaikh Qutb-al-Aqtaab*. As a disciple and spiritual successor of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, he was instrumental in consolidating the Chishti order in Delhi and its surrounding regions. His lifetime coincided with the reign of Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish, who was both his disciple and an eminent patron. The epithet "Kaki" is attributed to a hagiographical tradition in which the saint Khizr is said to have miraculously provided him with small cakes (*kaki*). Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki died on the 14th of Rabi' al-Awwal in 634 A.H., and his tomb has since become a focal point of spiritual devotion. The site's religious significance has contributed to the concentration of mosques, tombs, and other Islamic monuments in its vicinity, underscoring its central role in the sacred and cultural geography of Delhi.

### 3.1.2. Cultural History of Built heritage

Many pilgrims from various religions view the Qutb Sahib Dargah as a sacred spot. People of all religions visit the dargah daily to honor the famous Sufi saint, and the shrine is popular among the locals. On the other hand, Fridays and Thursdays are also noteworthy days to attend and take in the dargah's qawwalis night and festivities.

Traditionally, it is believed that Qutubuddin saw the prophet Muhammad in a dream, and the prophet indicated the exact spot for the construction of the tank. Hauz-e-shamsi was duly constructed at that very spot and soon became not only a source of water, but also a cultural and spiritual landmark of sorts for the denizens of Delhi. Every year, an annual procession called phoolwalon ki sair begins at this very tank and offers large, flower bedecked pankhas first at Bakhtiyar Kaki Dargah and later at the Jog Maya Temple in a unique display of syncretism. (<https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/73316/1/Unit-15.pdf>).

The annual *urs* of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki is one of the most significant events in the shrine's ritual calendar, attracting devotees from across the region. Extensive preparations begin nearly a month in advance, during which the *dargah* is adorned with floral decorations, sparklers, and illuminated with strings of lights. Night-long *qawwali mehfil*s are organized, transforming the complex into a vibrant space of devotional music and communal gathering. The shrine maintains a symbolic and ritual connection with the *dargah* of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer, as established in the tradition that a visit to the Ajmer *dargah* should be preceded by a pilgrimage to that of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki.

A distinctive feature of these celebrations is the *Chhadiyon ka Mela* (Festival of Sticks), in which mendicants, saints, and devotees carry wooden sticks topped with fluttering green flags as they process toward the shrine. The date of the *urs* is determined according to the traditional lunar calendar, after which participants proceed to the Ajmer *dargah*. Within popular Sufi belief, the tomb of a saint is thought to sanctify its surroundings, with proximity to such a burial considered spiritually advantageous. Pilgrims often engage in the practice of tying a thread near the saint's grave while making a wish, returning to untie it upon its fulfillment. Access to the inner courtyard containing the tomb is restricted for women, who instead pray in designated spaces adjacent to the white marble lattice screens that demarcate the central shrine area.



Figure 3: Mehrauli village with Dargah of Saint Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar kaki and chadiyon ka mela ; Source : <https://www.wmf.org/sites/default/files/article/pdfs/Mehrauli%20Village.pdf>

### 3.1.3. Description of Dargah Complex of Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki



Figure 4: Bakhtiyar kaki dargah, Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tomb\\_of\\_Sufi\\_saint,\\_Qutubuddin\\_Bakhtiyar\\_Kaki\\_in\\_Mehrauli,\\_Delhi.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tomb_of_Sufi_saint,_Qutubuddin_Bakhtiyar_Kaki_in_Mehrauli,_Delhi.jpg)

Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki's Dargah complex is connected by an intricate system of passages that lead to spacious open courtyards via ornate arched entrances. It is currently surrounded by marble balustrades and has a highly ornamented dome supported by decorative pillars. The grave was situated inside a rectangular enclosure that was roughly 29.89 m by 17.38 m in size. A marble screen with pierced and closed panels sometimes alternating with one

another was located on the east and north sides. There are 11 marble jali screens inside the eastern wall. A marble pavilion, approximately 4.5 m by 5.15 m, is situated above the burial and is supported by 12 glistening fluted columns.



Figure 5: Interiors of Dargah , Source : <https://dynamic-media-cdn.tripadvisor.com/media/photo-o/0fa8/e0/66/it-is-so-beautiful-you.jpg?w=1200&h=-1&s=1>

The grave is covered by a large colorful cloth, decorated with sequins and vibrant beads tied to the pillars of the marble railing. The interiors of the dome are adorned with beautiful mirror work, colorful calligraphy, and geometrical patterns. The multi-foliated arch and spandrels are decorated with golden work. All corners are topped by small cupolas, and the drum level is decorated with a Kalpataru plan design in silver work. A massive bulbous dome rises above the tomb. The most impressive feature of the tomb is its endearing gilded finial, which appears like a full-blown blooming golden floral outburst. ([https://www.peepultree.world/livehistoryindia/story/eras/sufi-heart-of Delhi](https://www.peepultree.world/livehistoryindia/story/eras/sufi-heart-of-Delhi), n.d.)

The Dargah features a number of gates and halls for various uses, including a baoli, mosques, tanks, and a majlis khana (assembly house), tosha khana (which doubled as a robe chamber and a storage space for various supplies), and Naubat khana (drum house). Farrukh Siyar is credited with building two gates, while Sheikh Khalil, a descendent of Baba Fariduddin Ganj-e-shankar, constructed the great northern gate during the reign of the Shah.

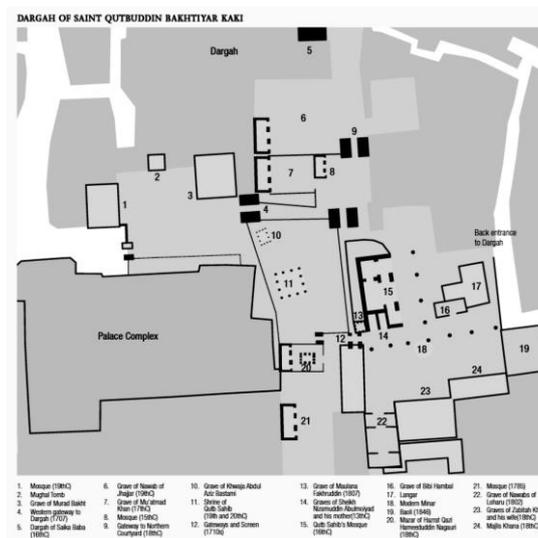


Figure6:Dargah of Saint Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar kaki ;Source : <https://www.wmf.org/sites/default/files/article/pdfs/Mehrauli%20Village.pdf>

### 3.2) Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah (Nizamuddin), C. 14th–15th century CE

Tomb of Hazrat Nizamuddin

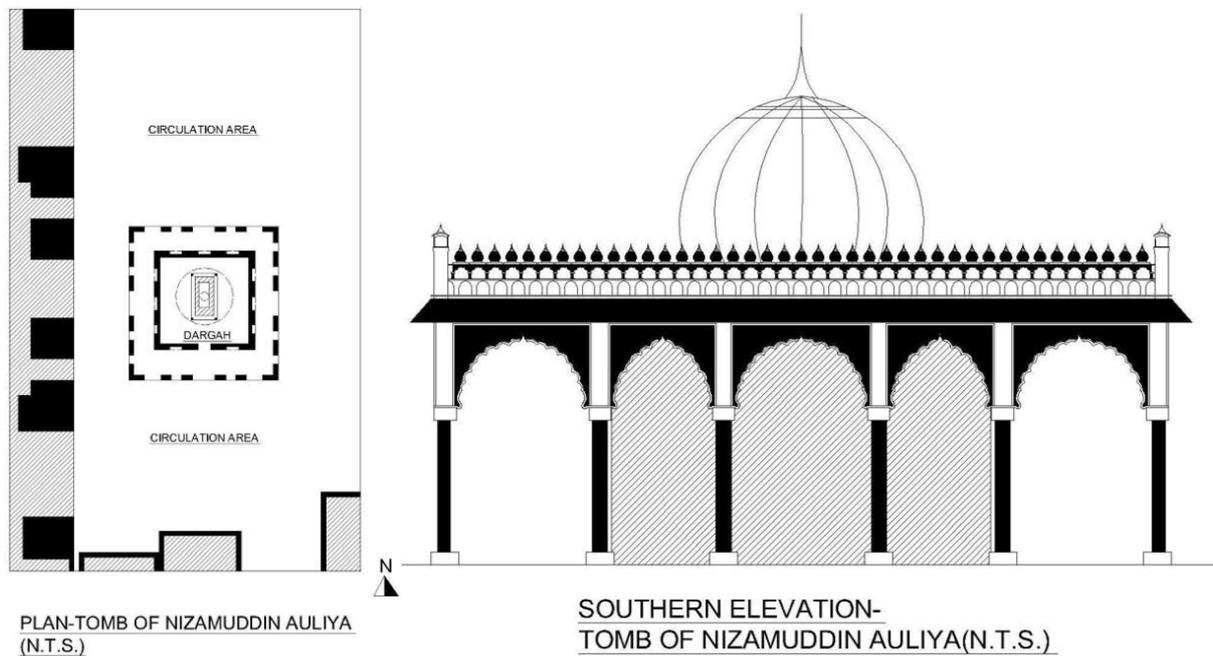


Figure 7: Plan and Elevation of Dargah complex; Source: <https://nmma.nic.in/nmma/builtDetail.do?refId=11700&dynasty=68>

It lies between the floodplain of the river Yamuna and the Delhi Ridge. Delhi Ridge is a Northern extension of ancient Aravalli Range.

#### 3.2.1. Brief History of Saint

One of the most well-known Sufi saints of the Chishti Order on the Indian Subcontinent was Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia. His grave is one of the holiest Islamic sites in India, and he is still held in high regard by both Muslims and Hindus. His worldview was characterized by a well-developed sense of benevolence and religious pluralism. He had such a profound impact on Delhi's Muslims that their perspective on worldly issues underwent a paradigm shift.

People began leaning toward mysticism, praying, and distancing themselves from the outside world. Muhammad Tughlaq and Alauddin Khalji were friends with him. Among his companions were the poet Khusrau, the famous saint Chirag Delhi, and Sayyid Mahmud Behar. Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki and Fariduddin Ganjshakar were his predecessors, while Hazrat Nasiruddin Mahmood Chirag-e-Delhi was his successor.

Baba Farid Shakarganj appointed him as his successor when he became a follower. He was born in 1238 A.D. to Khwaja Syed Ahmed and Bibi Zuleikha. His grandparents had moved to Badaun, Uttar Pradesh, a hub of study and trade at the time, from Bukhara, which is now in modern-day Uzbekistan, with their families in tow. His mausoleum is the reason hundreds of significant figures have visited it.

Emperor Humayun, among others, is buried nearby. Nothing remains of the original edifice that Firoz Shah Tughlaq renovated. Before he died in 1325, Hazrat Nizamuddin requested to be buried beneath the sky in the open courtyard on either side of the Jamaat Khana mosque. As a result, he was laid to rest in a plain burial plot. Since his burial, people of all social classes have chosen to lie in the enclosure known as Yaran Chabutra, the platform of friends, which is close to the tomb. Consequently, the entire interior of the enclosure has become a cemetery.

### 3.2.2. Cultural History of Built heritage

Every day, thousands of devotees arrive at the Dargah to honor the well-known saint or ask him to fulfill their wishes. Hazrat Nizamuddin's Urs festival is celebrated by adorning the walls and pillars with fairy lights, bouquets of marigolds and roses, and gorgeous carpets throughout the dargah complex. The city's top dignitaries frequently attend the nightly qawwali sessions.

There are railings surrounding the tomb where the faithful tie sacred red and yellow threads to beg the saint to grant their wishes, and the wishes are granted. When their wish is granted, they must return to remove the thread. Hundreds of these threads, both long and short, are visible hanging from the railings and the lattice screens, and they speak of the visitors' devotion and their faith in the Khwaja's ability to grant them boons, which is why men and women, young and old, sick and infirm, travel great distances to pray at this revered building.

Before bowing down and offering prayers, the devotees shower the grave with flower petals. It is customary to sit close to the head of the grave during prayer and then move toward the feet to lift the several layers of chuddar and kiss the grave or touch its forehead as a sign of the highest respect and unwavering trust, followed by a circumambulation of the sarcophagus tomb. Women are not permitted inside the chamber; they are only permitted to sit in the courtyard, cling to the tomb's walls, or pray outside the door.

### 3.2.3. Description of Dargah Complex of Nizamuddin Auliya



Figure 8: Dargah nizamuddin source : <https://dynamic-media-cdn.tripadvisor.com/media/photo-o/08/ff/8e/dc/hazrat-nizamuddin-darga.jpg?w=1200&h=1200&s=1>

The magnificent domed structure has a square floor layout and an external height of approximately 9.76 m. The structure's porch, which is approximately 2.10 meters long and marble-paved, features five arched openings on either side. A red sandstone chajja is supported by trefoil arches carried by the veranda's columns. A pinjra parapet with several dwarf domes on top is situated above the arches. Dwarf marble chattris with gold finials highlight the corners of the parapet. An octagonal drum supports the bulbous dome.



Figure 9: Interiors of nizamuddin dargah , source:<https://www.thepresidiumschool.com/hazrat-nizamuddin-dargah-itihaas-walk-gallery.php>

The dome is ornamented by vertical strips of black marble, topped by a pointed golden finial over an inverted lotus and flanked by numerous miniature domes along the length of the chajja, constructed over the tomb. The entire tomb sits on a high platform, and the narrow walkway that surrounds the tomb is marked with beautifully decorated fluted pillars that explode into splendid golden floral outbursts and support the white arches that themselves are covered every square inch with floral motifs. (<https://nmma.nic.in/nmma/builtDetail.do?refId=11698&dynasty=11>, n.d.)

The tomb's exterior is embellished with geometric floral designs and calligraphic inscriptions. A single door on the south side, flanked by a marble screen, leads to the 5.5-meter-long tomb chamber. Usually kept hidden by purdahs, the openings are filled with marble jail screens set within sandstone frames. The tomb's gold-painted walls were adorned with intricate gilded artwork in shades of violet, green, and red. Large stone lattice panels, which have also been expertly crafted, break up the monotony of the eye-catching gold panels.

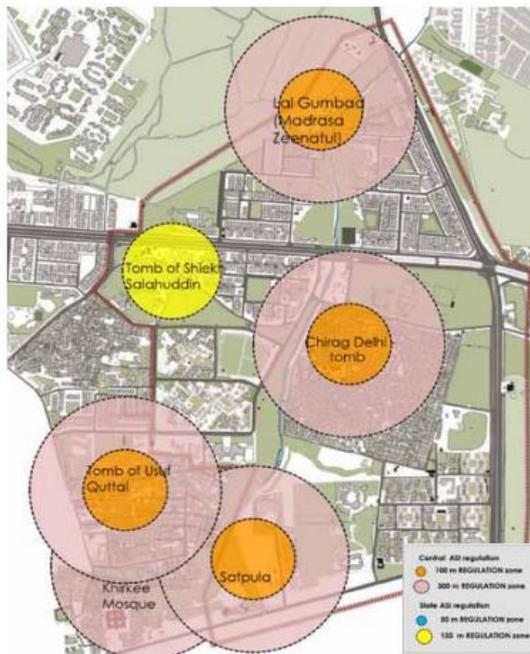
At the head, and to the east of the grave, the wall contains three screens of marble lattice work, the central one being larger than those on the other side, while the center of the western wall has a gilded mihrab. Inside the tomb, the marble grave is surrounded by a huge marble balustrade railing with a wide scented cloth thrown end to end and bewitching colored embroidered chaddars. The ethereal nature of the tomb is further propagated by large chandeliers that hang along the length of these extended courtyards and by green flower-like lanterns. (<https://nmma.nic.in/nmma/builtDetail.do?refId=11698&dynasty=11>, n.d.)

### 3.3) (Tomb of Nasir Uddin Mahmud (Roshan Chirag Delhi) C. 14th - 15th Cent.CE) d.1356

It lies in area between the flood plain of river Yamuna and Delhi Ridge. Delhi Ridge is a Northern extension of ancient Aravalli Range.

#### 3.3.1. Brief History of Saint

Hazrat Nasiruddin Mahmood Chirag-e-Delhi, a Sufi saint of the Chishti Order and mystic poet, lived from 1274 until 1356 A.D. He was a murid follower of the renowned Sufi saint Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya and his successor, Khalifa. He was the last significant Chishti Order Sufi in Delhi. Roshan Chirag-e-Delhi, which translates as "Illuminated Lamp of Delhi," was the title bestowed upon him. He passed away at the age of 82 in 1356 A.D. and was buried in a section of Delhi, India, called Chirag-e-Delhi. Thousands of people visit the Dargah, and the saint is still highly regarded.



### Heritage

1. Satpula – 1340
2. Tomb of Chirag Delhi (1351)– Bahlol Lodi’s Tomb (1489)
3. Tomb of Sheikh Salahuddin (1340)
4. Khirki Mosque (1375)
5. Lal Gumbad - Madarsa Zeenatul (1397)
6. Tomb of Usuf Qattal (1527)

Figure 10: Heritage structures in Chirag Delhi Source :

<https://duac.org.in/Upload/City%20Level%20Studies/Site%20specific%20design%20for%20wards/653949613203314.pdf>

### 3.3.2. Cultural History of Built heritage

The daily events that take place in a dargah can be called Khidmat, the routine service done in the main tomb. In the dargah, weekly and monthly functions have special significance. On the night that falls between Thursday and Friday, a special mahfil, which means gathering, is arranged near the tomb.

### 3.3.3. Description of Dargah Complex of Chirag-i-delhi

The significant domed building is square in plan and has a 12 pillared square chamber enclosed within perforated screen jails and surmounted by a plastered dome rising from an octagonal drum. Small domed turrets are present at the four corners. Much of the original structure has been changed, including the chajja, columns, flooring, roofing, and jails. There is a kangura pattern battlement running on all sides of the parapet. The entire tomb is painted in white and a very light shade of gold. The courtyard is laid with white marble. (Rakshanda)

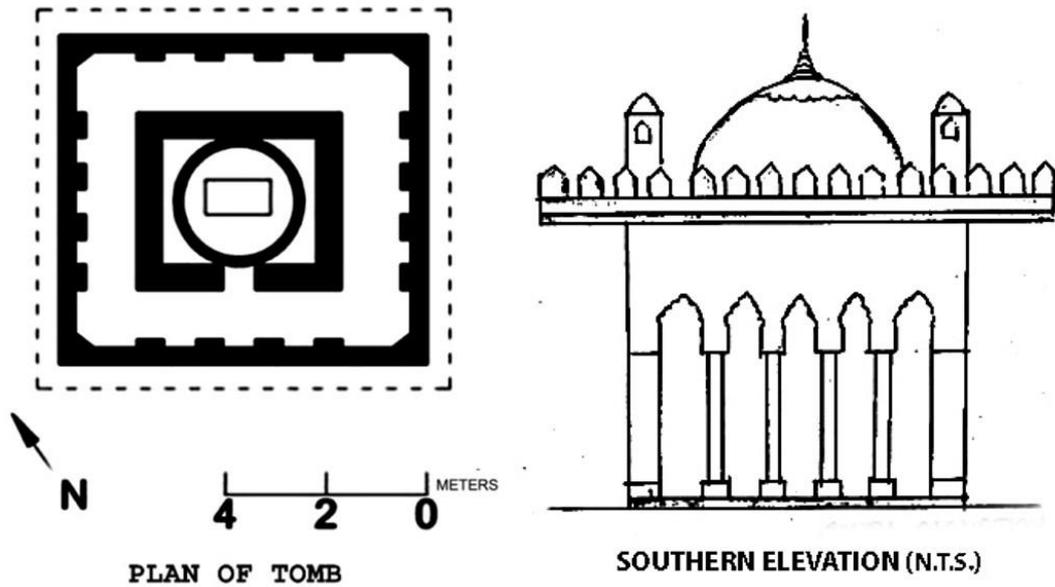


Figure 11: Tomb of chirag-i -Delhi; Source :[https://nmma.nic.in/nmma/built\\_Detail.do?refId=11440&dynasty=5](https://nmma.nic.in/nmma/built_Detail.do?refId=11440&dynasty=5)

The structure is made of brick masonry for additions and modifications, as well as rubble masonry. Terrazzo flooring was installed. While the inside balustrade is composed of marble, the outer one is composed of metal work.

To get to the chowk that borders the Dargah complex, one must make their way via a number of winding, chaotic streets. One must remove their shoes and cover their heads to enter the facility. The Dargah offers a serene atmosphere that contrasts with the bustling streets outside, unlike the rest of the Chirag Delhi area. The Dargah's space is further sanctified by this contrast or distinction.



Figure 12: Chirag Delhi Dargah Source : <https://delhidarshan.com/wp-content/uploads/schema-and-structured-data-for-wp/Chiragh-Dehli-1200x857.jpg>

The Dargah could possibly be understood in terms of Foucault's heterotopic spaces or the 'other' spaces. (Foucault 1967) The Dargah is a contrasting space; its value is derived from this difference. It acts as an 'other' space that exists alongside existing spaces. It is an object that exists in time, while at the same time it is reminiscent of a past time when the Dargah was more popular and visited by many Sufi patrons. While Chirag Delhi continues to densify internally, the Dargah retains its immediate walls, making it frozen in time. It also falls into the category of religious heterotopic space. Although it is a public space, it is not truly 'public' as its entry is restricted. The ritual of removing one's footwear or covering one's head must precede one's entry. (<https://www.wmf.org/sites/default/files/article/pdfs/Mehrauli%20Village.pdf>, n.d.)

In the same sense, Chirag Delhi could also be categorized as a heterotopic space. Morphologically, its fabric differs from the surrounding areas, where it shows organic growth as opposed to a planned settlement. As a Lal Dora area, it does not fall under the standard government regulations.

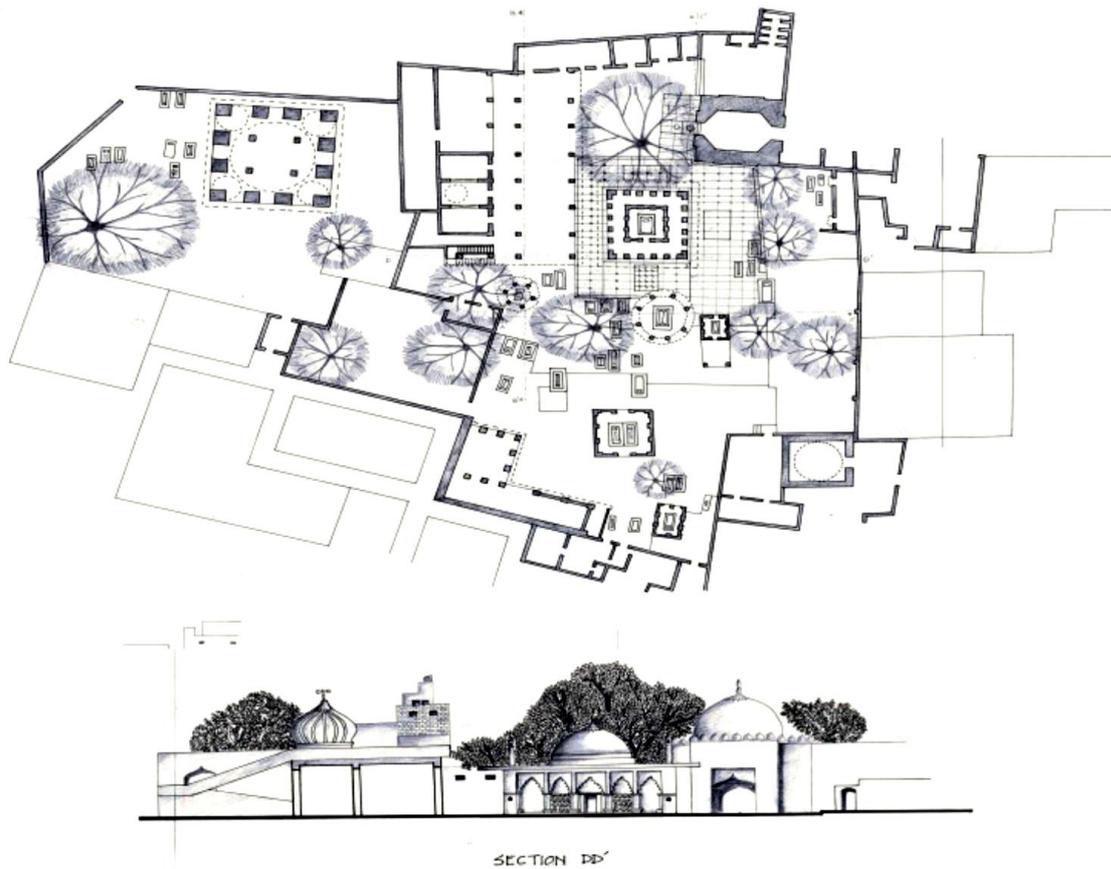


Figure 13: Plan and Sectional view of the Chirag Delhi Dargah, the Mausoleum of Sheikh Naseeruddin Mahmud, Chirag Delhi, New Delhi ; Source: USAP (2011), Chirag Delhi Study, II Year Design Studio, USAP 2010-2015 Batch, Studio Coordinator: Gupta, A., USA

Table 1 : Documentation of all Chishti order Sufi's Tomb in Delhi

Sr. No	Name of Sufi Tomb	Location	Village	Cultural affiliation	Ownership	Protection Status
1	Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki Dargah	South Delhi	Mehrauli	Khilji Period	Public	Unprotected
2	Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah	South Delhi	Nizamuddin	Tughlaq Period	Dargah Hazrat Nizamuddin, Trust	Protected
3	Shaikh Nasir Uddin Mahmud Dargah	South Delhi	Chirag Delhi	Tughlaq period	Public	Unprotected

Table 2: Architectural Historiography of Chisti Silsilah in Delhi

Sr.No	Name of Sufi Tomb	Architectural style	Current Condition	Cultural Influence	Key Characteristics
1	Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki Dargah (13)	Khilji architecture style Iltutmish Mamluk dynasty	Maintained	The annual Urs of the Saint is called Chhadiyon ka Mela.	Red sandstone and Arcuate style relieved by marble, recessed arches beneath the squinch, perforated windows, a large dome, and a genuine arch in the shape of a pointed horseshoe are also present.
2	Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah (14)	Tuglaq architecture Mohammad bin tuglaq	Maintained	The Urs festival of Hazrat Nizamuddin Qawwali sessions are organized	Intricate marble work, Ornate domes, Vertical stripes of black marble and a lotus-crested, Serene courtyard
3	Shaikh Nasir Uddin Mahmud Dargah (14)	Tuglaq architecture Firoz shah tuglaq	Maintained	In dargah, weekly and monthly functions get a special significance. Qawwali nights are held on Thursdays and Fridays at a special Mahfil.	The Mughal emperor Mohammad Shah built an outer enclosure wall around the Dargah-a-Roshan with four large gateways, one on each side of the wall.

Architectural studies link the physical form of dargah complexes to broader Mughal and Sultanate building traditions. Dargahs commonly combine a domed tomb chamber, surrounding arcades, ancillary rooms (such as majlis khana and tosh khana), and courtyard spaces that mediate between sacred interior and urban exterior (Asher, 1992; Dadlani, 2018). The material and spatial relations between dargahs and adjacent monuments—e.g., the proximity of Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki's dargah to Zafar Mahal and the Mughal funerary landscape—reflect layered processes of patronage and re-use (Dadlani, 2018; Welch & Crane, 1983). Architectural historiography thus provides both typological

descriptions and methods (plans, measured drawings, archival images) for reconstructing how these complexes functioned physically and socially.

#### 4. Cultural influence of Chishti order Dargah

Research into Sufi ritual life elucidates the performative components that made dargahs cultural magnets. Practices such as qawwali, urs (annual death-anniversary commemorations), and devotional assemblies produced concentrated periods of social interaction and cultural transmission; these practices underwrote the dargah's reputation as a centre for music, oral narrative, and communal charity (Ernst, 1997; Peacock & Nur, 2013). Contemporary ethnographic and historical treatments (including more recent mapping and site-specific studies) show how musical lineages (for instance, families associated with Nizamuddin) perpetuated performance traditions and connected the shrine to broader circuits of cultural production (Kumar, 2019).

Delhi's cultural fabric has been influenced by the Dargah, which is examined in this study. The order was founded in the 11th century by the Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, who emphasized devotion, love, and the personal experience of union with God. This influence is felt from all three dargahs in Delhi to the Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti Dargah in Ajmer. The Chadiyo ka Mela, which begins in Delhi and ends in Ajmer, is an example of how this influence is still felt today. Throughout northern India, this network of dargahs also serves religious tourists. As part of the religious tourism circuit concept, these dargahs generate income for the local economy and job prospects.

They have also influenced the region's artistic integrity in terms of language, poetry, music, and other forms of art. Promoting social harmony and cultural unity is another essential component that goes beyond religion itself. A spiritual space where borders may be transcended was created when their hospices (jama'atkhana/khanaqah) and later their shrines (dargah/darbar/mazar sharif) were opened to all groups of people regardless of gender, caste, or religion.

The yearly Urs ceremonies (death anniversary) at Sufi shrines serve as a constant reminder of these highly significant cultural and political ideals. In addition to praying for the real desires of devotees and for peace and tranquility in society at large, the qawwals (singers and musicians) sing praise for religious exemplars (God, prophets, and spiritual masters).

Dargahs functioned as sites of direct social engagement—offering food, shelter, dispute mediation, and spiritual guidance—which grounded their influence in everyday urban life (Rizvi, 1983). Eaton's analysis of Sufi networks underscores similar welfare functions that strengthened ties with lay communities and rulers alike, thereby enabling dargahs to operate as intermediaries between the state and populace (Eaton, 2003). This dual social-religious role explains why dargahs maintained prominence across regime changes.

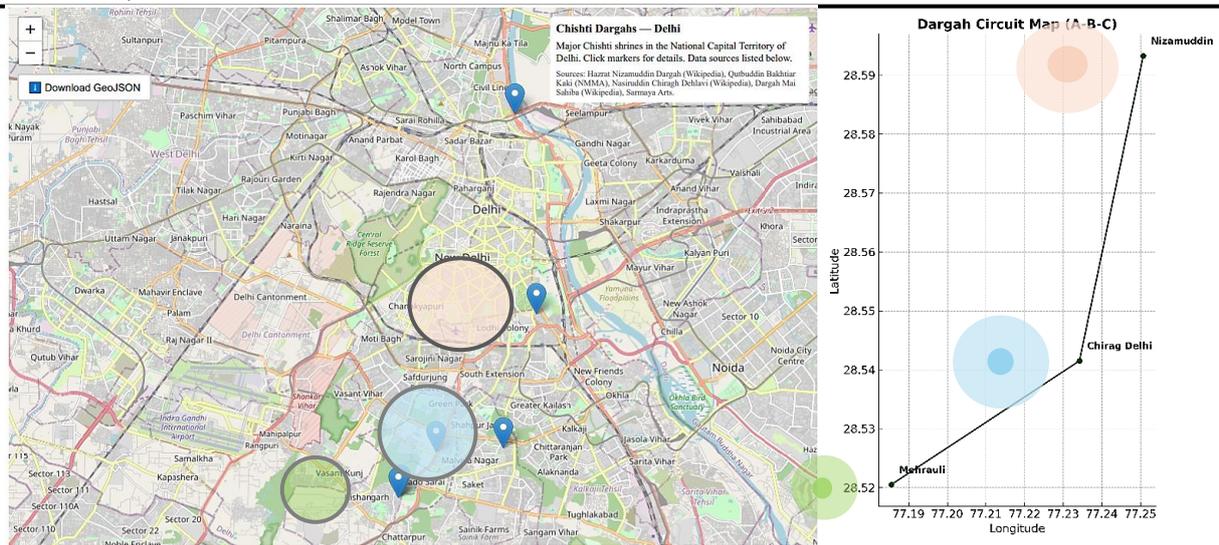


Figure 14: Dargah Circuit map (A-B-C) A).Nizamuddin -B)Chirag Delhi- C) Mehrauli Source : Author

### 5.Conclusion

The Chishti order’s dargahs in medieval Delhi were more than sacred tombs. They were dynamic institutions that intertwined spirituality, cultural production, and urban life. By fostering values of inclusiveness, compassion, and service, they became spaces where religious devotion coexisted with music, poetry, architecture, and social welfare. Their role as centers of pilgrimage, charity, and artistic expression forged deep connections across diverse communities, shaping Delhi’s cosmopolitan character during the Sultanate period. Architecturally, these dargahs embodied the synthesis of Sultanate and Mughal aesthetics, while culturally, they acted as nodes in a wider network linking Delhi to other Chishti centers such as Ajmer. The persistence of traditions like ours celebrations and qawwali performances reflects their lasting impact, both as heritage sites and as living cultural spaces. Preserving these shrines today is not only about safeguarding monuments, but also about protecting the intangible heritage of dialogue, unity, and creativity that they continue to inspire.

### 6.Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest in this present research paper. This research work is not a part of any other study and is my original work.

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