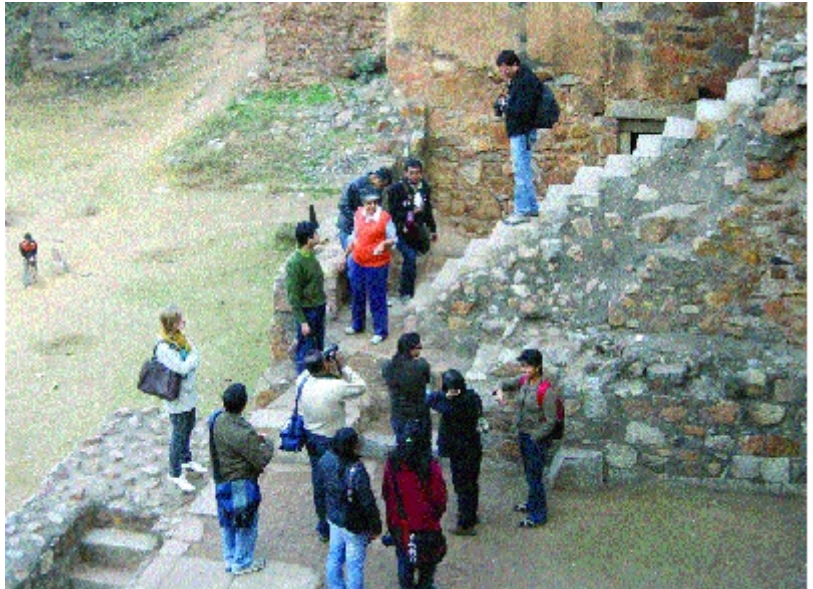


Delhiites wake up to heritage walks

By *editor*

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Heritage has its own charm. And seems the masses at large have realised that. The group of heritage walkers in the capital is mushrooming by the day. Besides the government organisation like the Shahjehanabad Redevelopment Corporation (SRDC) that conducts walks at regular intervals at the heritage sites and some organised firms like the India Habitat Centre and INTACH Delhi Chapter, there are initiatives for heritage walks at individual levels too. Knowing Loving Delhi Better, which started around a decade and a half ago, is one such group started at individual level by three friends over a cup of coffee. Ayushman, one of the



[1] group members, says that it was started at the spur of the moment. "Nothing was planned. As Delhiites, we were discussing how we don't know many things about the heritage and culture of Delhi and the idea of visiting and discovering the stories of different places came up. It was followed by a few phone calls to friends who could have been interested and we were ready for a walk with a group of 30 people. It was in 1997 and since then we have conducted walks regularly," says Ayushman. The group members read about the place they are going to visit beforehand and on the course of walking discuss and share whatever they know about it. They have no website or Facebook page, just a Google account and word of mouth publicity helps them.

Delhi Heritage Walks is another group formed by a bunch of youngsters, but with sound knowledge of history. It was formed two years ago with few consistent members who are either interested or studying history or culture. Kanika Singh, one of the members, a student of history, says, "We formed this group because the number of people interested were increasing by the day. Now, we have different members taking care of different requirements. There's someone well clued into archaeology, some in history, some in culture and so on," says Kanika and adds that inputs from many people give them an upper hand. A majority of their members are young professionals in 20s and 30s.

Art curator Himanshu Verma, who has been conducting walks for a long time now under his group Red Earth, says there's a sudden increase in curiosity among people about the city and its history. "Delhiites, as well as tourists, want to know and discover all about the city. Besides many join such walks for the thrill that walking early morning among the ruins brings along," says Himanshu.

However, Dr Navina Jafa, a cultural activist, academician, performing artist, cultural historian and cultural entrepreneur, who works with the SRDC alongside handling her own research organisation, says that heritage walks are meant to be a tool for development and a method to

spread awareness about the heritage of a particular place. “The rise of so many clubs, however, is making it a business, more than a cultural activity,” she says.

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