



LALIT NIRULA

distinctly remember August 1947. We were not allowed to go outside after sunset. Late evenings were pitch dark; the shops were closed and one could clearly hear the sound of sirens.

Sleeping on the roof, I remember looking towards Old Delhi and seeing a reddish glow in the sky and being told that there were fires burning in that area.

What I remember most distinctly after that was probably the second half of '47 and '48 when the inner circle was more crowded than it had ever been. The verandas were full of people and walking space was limited as the refugees had opened little stalls with gas lanterns on the covered corridor floor. These people were initially shifted to Irwin Road (Baba Kharak Singh Marg) and Panchkuan Road where they opened kiosks and then some were later shifted to what became Mohan Singh Market. Many other refugees and migrants were also shifted to Queenway (Janpath), as well as across the outer circle near Shankar Market, and are still there. Though Oriental Fruit Mart in E-Block was supposed to be the best fruit shop in New Delhi, the new Irwin Road fruit shop opposite Rivoli cinema, soon became popular as they sold the best in terms of quality and price.

One of the most frequented dhabas in New Delhi in the '50s and '60s, Kake da Hotel, opened across the road from our restaurants and continues to be popular. It was then run by two brothers, each one doing either lunch or dinner with their own raw material and freshly cooked meals. Hence, the food served was always freshly cooked and not leftover from the previous meal.



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owner of Moti Mahal, introduced Delhi to the delights of tandoori chicken as normally meats were cooked on horizontal skewers on a charcoal grill and the tandoor was used for cooking rotis and naans. I remember him as a large, smiling

man with a large moustache, wearing a pathani suit with a patthi topi, always greeted his regular customers at the entrance. I think he was also the inventor of 'butter chicken', which, I was told, came about when his chicken curry finished and to provide a gravy chicken dish, he took a half-done tandoori chicken, added butter, tomatoes and spices and cooked it in a

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The area around Qutab Minar, including Mehrauli, had mango orchards and had some bungalows, and I remember hearing that the 'Dilliwala Seth's', who lived in the walled city, had country homes here to house their mistresses! India Gate lawns with King George V, at one end, and Rashtrapati Bhavan, at the other, was also a favourite place in the summer evenings and for lunch during winter months up to the early '60s as there were few people there.

As we live in D-Block, the Republic Day Parade would pass by on the street in front of us every year and to us on alternate years. As a matter of routine, this event would see many people visiting us who discovered that they had not met us for a long time and would, coincidentally, lean over the verandah railings to watch the parade pass by!

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My schooling started at the age of four in a tent at Delhi Public School (DPS). A new school started by Reverend J.D. Tytler, a big (to me as a little child), smiling and red-faced bearded man. It was located in the grounds of Cathedral Church of the redemption in Church Lane near Rashtrapati Bhavan. DPS then moved to its present Mathura Road location and still operated from tents, till I left the school in January 1954, to join a boarding school. Tents were made for interesting classrooms and, as

Rains were a delightful and exciting time as CP roads were sure to get flooded at least once, with sometimes even the shops getting flooded. The flooding at Minto Bridge was a yearly event. I would look forward to playing with someone older after the rain stopped to walk around CP, as water on the roads would be thigh deep for a 11 year old child. Minto Bridge would always be a great place to bus as normally there would be a bus or two roof deep in water! Ah, the excitement of those days!

Connaught Place in the evenings was exotic. There were peacock feather sellers, and people selling caged parrots, which were also seen flying around CP in large numbers. Many times, the bhawaliwallah, the saperia with his 'been' and the bandarwallah would be seen on the open pavements and in the park.

The one person I have never forgotten was a dignified elderly white-turbaned man, who probably moved to Delhi after partition and who would walk with his bicycle in the verandahs of CP selling

fruits. This entire area now comprises R.K.

The Birth Of India Around C P

PART:3

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#GROWING UP IN CP

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children, we did not find them unusual at all. In fact, whenever it rained, I had dreams of using my table as a raft and floating home on it!

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Edwin Chan lived in CP and was an interior designer who specialized in wood furniture and interiors, and as a very young man, had worked with his father on the woodwork of the Viceroy's House (Rashtrapati Bhavan). His passion

was to invent and develop a perpetual motion machine and till he died, sometime in the early '90s, when asked how the project was going, he would optimistically proclaim that it was just a step away from completion.

To be continued...

Another interesting and talented individual was Nishi Nakra, whom I got to know in 1960, when he did the music system for our new restaurant, La Boheme. He was a good engineer and passionate about sound. He developed speakers and amplifiers under the brand name, Enbee, in an era when such items could not be imported. Besides being an inventive engineer, he was also a very talented singer and I would often visit him at his shop in Shankar Market, which was just a few minutes from my home and office. There one would often meet or see many of the people who were to become well-known in public life and business.

Looking at it today, it may be difficult to believe that CP was a great place to grow up. For a child and a teenager, it had everything. As children, we were sent to the central park every evening, where we had a lot of space to run around and play games. There were vendors selling balloons, toys and sweets, ice-lolly sticks which were made of shaved ice particles, fixed on a stick with a choice of various coloured syrups poured onto them! Despite the scolding that we knew we would get (the water was not 'safe'), we loved them.

There was also the seller of bhuji mai ke baal (candy floss), who would sell his goods from a glassed in trolley. Delicious aam papad (beaten and dried mango) and soft imli (amarind) were available at a bania's shop in the middle circle behind M-Block and was another favourite. The aam papad was sour and leathery in feel but was utterly delicious, especially with a sprinkling of kala namak (black salt). The imli was soft, gooey and sour and much appreciated. When we had saved some money, we would go to J.B. Mangaram on the side of F-Block, facing E-Block, which had a great collection of sweets in glass jars on top of the counters, which were the same height as we were.

To be continued...

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often went for picnics to Qutab Minar and Okhla, which really seemed to be in the countryside, a long way away from CP. And the local area maidans used to come into play. The area around Qutab Minar, including Mehrauli, had mango orchards and had some bungalows, and I remember hearing that the 'Dilliwala Seth's', who lived in the walled city, had country homes here to house their mistresses! India Gate lawns with King George V, at one end, and Rashtrapati Bhavan, at the other, was also a favourite place in the summer evenings and for lunch during winter months up to the early '60s as there were few people there.

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