

Changes in Street Names of Delhi

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Abstract

The process of street naming is shadowy. Even after guidelines of Ministry of Home Affairs to stop renaming of streets which belong to history, there are even recent cases of street name changes. The decision of what belongs to history and what does not along with who decides all these is debatable issue. A considerable proportion of the streets have been historically named for commemorative purposes. After Independence, there seemed to be a rush in democratizing street names. Therefore, street names after British Viceroys were changed and named after Indian Personalities.

Keywords: phonetically, semantically, diplomatic goodwill, viceroy, VIP culture

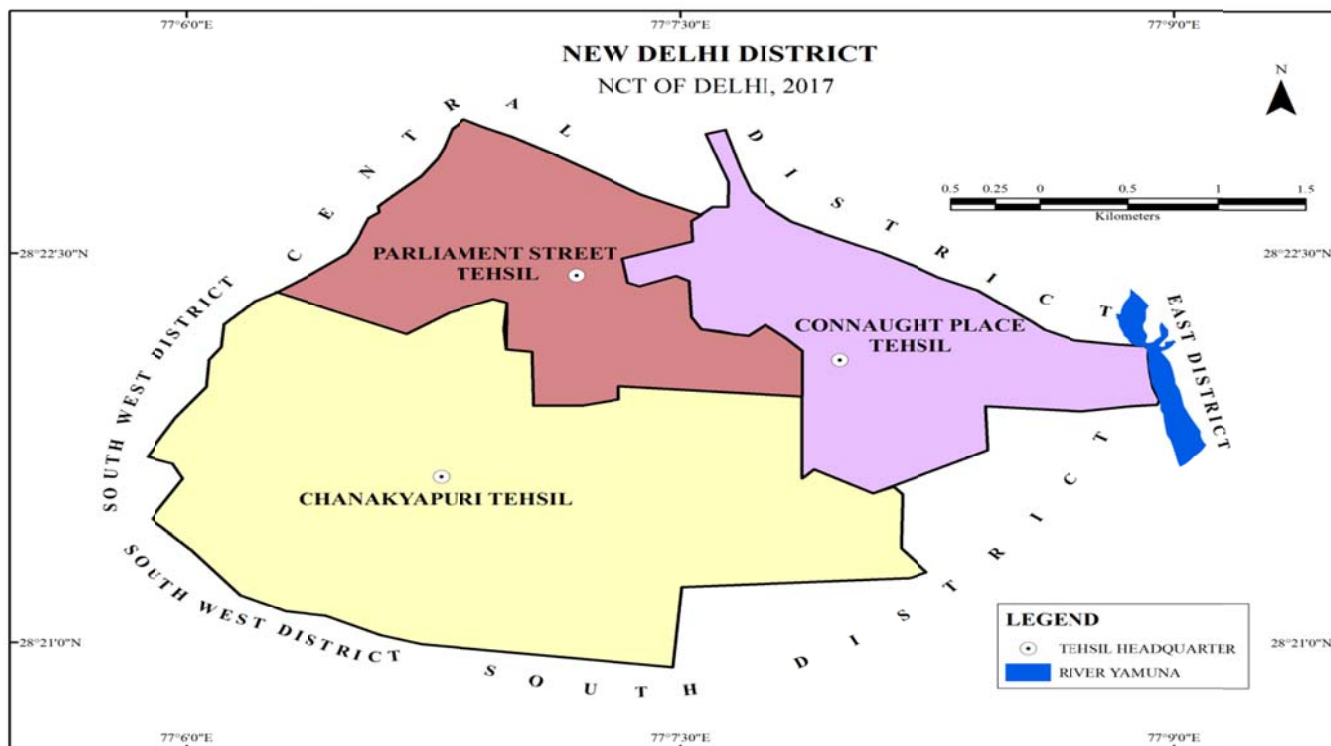
Introduction

All street names undergo continual development within a language changing phonetically and semantically. The former type of change consists of primarily sound shifts the latter changes occur from cultural change when some words are lost from common usage. Both changes eventually lead to the replacement of the original meaning. It is thus established that

street-name alteration, be it within one language or between several languages is not an unusual phenomenon.

Methodology

New Delhi district is a part of one of the eleven districts of New Delhi, capital of India. It consists of three Tehsils- Chanakypuri, Connaught Place and Parliament Street Tehsil.



Source: Census of India, 2011.

Fig 1: Map 1.1 Tehsil Map of New Delhi District

A total of thirty streets were selected for the study. Selection of streets was based on importance in terms of coverage and road system hierarchy. Therefore, streets of every type (arterial, sub arterial and local) covering all three tehsils of New Delhi were selected.

Some of the selected Streets were planned and built in colonial time and were renamed after independence. Therefore, the Street names can be compared along with examining implications or renaming.



Source: Prepared by researcher

Fig 2: Map 1.2 Location of Streets selected for the study

The New Delhi district was selected for the study because it was the site of Lutyens Delhi in colonial time and at present holds a special status in terms of serving as a memoir which needs to be maintained and preserved. Therefore, historical analysis of Street names in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times can be undertaken. Also the change of Street names in this area has wider implications.

Reasons for change in street names

Street names can be changed by municipal authorities for various reasons.

- Sometimes streets are renamed to reflect a changing or previously unrecognized ethnic community or to commemorate politicians and local heroes.
- A change in political regime can trigger widespread changes in street names- many street names in New Delhi changed following independence in 1947 with streets named after British colonists being changed to those of Indian nationalist leaders.
- Sometimes international causes can attract cities around the world to rename streets in solidarity; for example Wellington crescent in New Delhi was renamed to Mother Teresa Crescent after her death.
- Street names can also be changed to avoid negative associations
- Street names can change due to change in official language. After the creation of Street Names Authority in 1999, many streets were renamed in New Delhi in accordance with the local language of the area.

- Sometimes, due to lack of identical street naming system causes the establishment of an Authority to adopt uniform street naming system. For the purpose of uniformity in street names guidelines, the existing names are changed.

Sometimes, street renaming can be controversial, because of dislike towards the new name, the renaming of a respected traditional name, or confusion from the change.

It is also debated because it is seen by many as a way to rewrite history, even if the original name is not well liked but nevertheless it perceived as traditional or convenient. It can be used to remove the presence of a cultural group or previous political rule, whether positive or negative, and to show the supremacy of a new cultural group or political rule.

Process of Renaming of Street

It is common for sovereign administrations to create new state symbols to "remove evidence of the colonial regime and to establish an identity for the country." This is exactly what the New Delhi did by renaming Streets of the colonial regime. After independence in 1947, streets were renamed after Indian Nationalist heroes, politicians etc. But, the renaming of streets created controversial sometimes which led to intervening of The Ministry of Home Affairs to issue guidelines on the subject of renaming streets in 1975. The guidelines are as follows-

- For nomenclature of various roads, streets in the National Capital Territory of Delhi, the guidelines issued by The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India dated 29.9.1975 are followed. As per these guidelines, the

changes in the names of streets/roads etc. not only create confusion for the Post Offices and the public, but also deprive the people of a sense of history. Therefore, it was decided that the name of existing street/roads etc., should not be changed. Only new streets/roads etc., and such old street/roads etc., as are in existence without specific names may be named after eminent personalities local, national or international, to honour them.

- Once the street has been named after a particular dignitary then a fresh proposal for renaming should not be sent to the Street Names Authority.
- The names of existing streets should not be changed.
- Names which are part of history may not be altered.
- Any renaming can be considered can be considered by the Council only when there are directions from the Government of India. The Department shall communicate to the applicant directly as per the guidelines of Government of India.
- Renaming can only be an exception. Recommendations in this regard can be given by the Council and any contrary decision of the Government of India shall be brought to the notice of the council.

The Special Status of New Delhi Municipal Corporation Zone

New Delhi Municipal Corporation is one of the three civic bodies that govern municipal operations in Delhi. The other two are – Municipal Corporation of Delhi and Delhi Cantonment Board. About 31% of the total area of Delhi comes under New Delhi Municipal Corporation administration. It covers an area of 43.7 square kilometre of what is known as Lutyens Delhi, after the British architect Edward Lutyens who designed most of the New Delhi city, during 1912-1930, which is now the seat of Government of India.

New Delhi Municipal Corporation has some of the most expensive property of Asia, like Khan Market and Amrita Shergill Marg. Some of the very important persons of the country including the President, Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Bureaucrats and Ambassadors to powerful nations, reside in the New Delhi Municipal Corporation Zone.

The New Delhi Municipal Corporation depicts itself on its website as “the territory that has been described as Lutyens Delhi and which has historically come to be regarded as the seat of Central Authority in the Union of India”. The website also reflects the most persuasive call to keep the VIP culture sustained. It states “effective functioning of the municipal services in the area is critical for the internal image of the country and is a factor which has important bearing on the functioning of the government apparatus itself”.

Street Names and Diplomatic Goodwill

Chanakyapuri Tehsil is the diplomatic enclave of New Delhi Municipal Corporation Zone. Some of the streets in this area are kept unnamed so that they can be named after International personalities proposed by The Ministry of External Affairs. Sometimes, when the international treaties are signed between India and other countries, as a matter of diplomatic goodwill streets are named after some inherent component of the treaty, world leaders, or those international dignitaries who have played prominent role in the signing of the treaty. The streets

are also named after names proposed by international organizations like United Nations.

There are about 20 streets which are named on these lines as described above. The list of these street names is as follows-

Table 1: Street Names after International Personalities

Street Name	Tehsil
Manas Marg	Chanakyapuri
Copernicus Marg	Connaught Place
Abai Marg	Chanakyapuri
Africa Avenue	Chanakyapuri
General Jose Artigas Marg	Chanakyapuri
Dr. Jose P. Rizal Marg	Chanakyapuri
Kwame Nkrumah Marg	Chanakyapuri
Andre Malraux Marg	Chanakyapuri
Simon Bolivar Marg	Chanakyapuri
Sir Edmund Hillary Marg	Chanakyapuri
Tenzing Norgay Marg	Chanakyapuri
Ahmad Shah Massoud	Chanakyapuri
Olaf Palme Marg	Chanakyapuri
Nelson Mandela Marg	Chanakyapuri
Abdul Gaffar Khan Marg	Chanakyapuri
Arch Bishop Makorius Marg	Chanakyapuri
San Martin Marg	Chanakyapuri

Source: Prepared by Researcher, 2017

The above list of street names are christened after World leaders, military officers, poets, mountaineers, scientists, religious preachers etc. Names such as Manas Marg and Africa Avenue are named after places in other countries. Manas is an air base station located in Kyrgyzstan which is vital for strategic positioning in Central Asia. The street Manas Marg was named on 16th April, 1999. Africa is a name of continent after which the street is named in New Delhi as an expression of country’s friendship with the continent.

A considerable number of streets are named after World leaders and military officials. Most of them were nationalist leaders who later on also occupied political seats. These include Jose P. Rizal, who was Filipino nationalist leader, Simon bolivar who was Venezuelan political figure, prime leader San Martin from Argentina who struggled successfully for independence, former Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme and Afghan political and military leader Ahmad Shah Massoud. These names were given to streets for showcasing diplomatic goodwill of the country with other respective nations after whose leaders the streets are named.

A handful of the streets are named after International personalities who have outshone themselves in the field of culture. For example, Abai Marg was named on 12 February, 1999 after Abai Kunanbaev who was a Kazakh poet and Andre Malraux Marg named after French novelist Andre Malraux. Copernicus Marg is named after scientist Nicolas Copernicus. Two streets are named after Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay who were the first mountaineers to reach Mt. Everest. These names were proposed by United Nations Children’s Fund and the proposal was forwarded by Ministry of External Affairs to New Delhi Municipal Council.

Africa’s Link with Delhi: Streets

Four of Delhi’s Arterial streets have an African connection or are named after leaders in Africa.

Nelson Mandela, for instance is one of them. An important street named after Mandela connects two of the capital’s best addresses, housing colonies that are very posh. Most of the visitors to Jawaharlal Nehru University have to pass through Nelson Mandela Marg to get to the campus of University. Indian Institute of Technology is linked to diplomatic enclave of Chanakyapuri by a street that is personification of country’s friendship with the continent: Africa Avenue.

Gamal Abdel Nasser Marg, became increasingly famous when he was Egypt’s President and was a hero to his generation’s writers. Gambel Abdel Nasser Marg is located in South Delhi near Hauz Khas Village.

Kwame Nkrumah is an African name. Nkrumah’s native land was Ghana, once known as the Gold Coast. He was the Prime Minister of independent Ghana and one of the founders of the organisation of African Unity. It has an important organisation in Indian Diplomatic schemes today under its new name, The African Union. After nine years of Ghana freedom, Nkrumah’s political career as Pan- African leader came to an end by the rebellion. With respect to his short tenure in office, Kwame Nkrumah Marg is a short stretch of street in Chanakyapuri unlike the other three streets located here with African connections.



Source: Google images

Fig 1: Signage showing street name after international personalit

Changes in Street Names of New Delhi

The independence of India created a need for restoring a sense of national identity with the help of symbols. This led to a large scale change of Street names christened after the colonial rulers. The period from 1950- 1975 was an active period for change in Street names. After 1975, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued guidelines imposing a ban on renaming of Streets which are a part of history. But the changes in Street names did not stop completely after the notification. There are recent accounts of changes in Street names which were part of the history, even after the prohibition of renaming by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Here is list of Changes in Street names of New Delhi-

Table 2: Changes in Street Names

New Name	Old Name	Type	Reason
Janpath	Queensway	Arterial	Democratization of name
Rajpath	Kingsway	Arterial	To change street name into local language
Baba Kharak Singh Marg	Irwin Road	Sub Arterial	To create national identity by honouring local heroes
Kasturba Gandhi Marg	Curzon Road	Sub Arterial	To create national identity by honouring local heroes
Sardar Patel Marg	Kitchener Road	Arterial	To create national identity by honouring local heroes
Mother Teresa Cres	Willing don Cres	Sub Arterial	To commemorate Mother Teresa after her death, name proposed by Ministry of External Affairs
Tilak Marg	Hardinge Avenue	Arterial	To create national identity by honouring local heroes
Mandir Marg	Reading Road	Sub Arterial	To replace the colonial name by religious site
Teen Murti Road	Roberts Road	Sub Arterial	To create national identity by honouring local heroes
Bangla Sahib Marg	Baird Road	Sub Arterial	To replace the street name after colonial Viceroy to be named after a Gurudwara
Kali Bari Marg	Havelock road	Sub Arterial	To replace the colonial name by religious site
Tees January Marg	Albuquerque Road	Sub Arterial	To commemorate the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi
APJ Abdul Kalam Road	Aurangzeb Road	Arterial	To preserve the legacy of Peoples’ President
Lok Kalyan Road	Race Course Road	Arterial	To give message of general public welfare.
Dara Shikoh Road	Darjeeling Road	Sub Arterial	For social harmony
Zakhir Hussain Marg	Wellesly Road	Arterial	To commemorate Dr Zakhir Husain after his death

Source: Based on Primary Survey, 2017



Source: Google images

Fig 2: Renaming of Aurangzeb Road to APJ Abdul Kalam Road



Fig 3: Renaming of Race Course Road to Lok Kalyan Marg

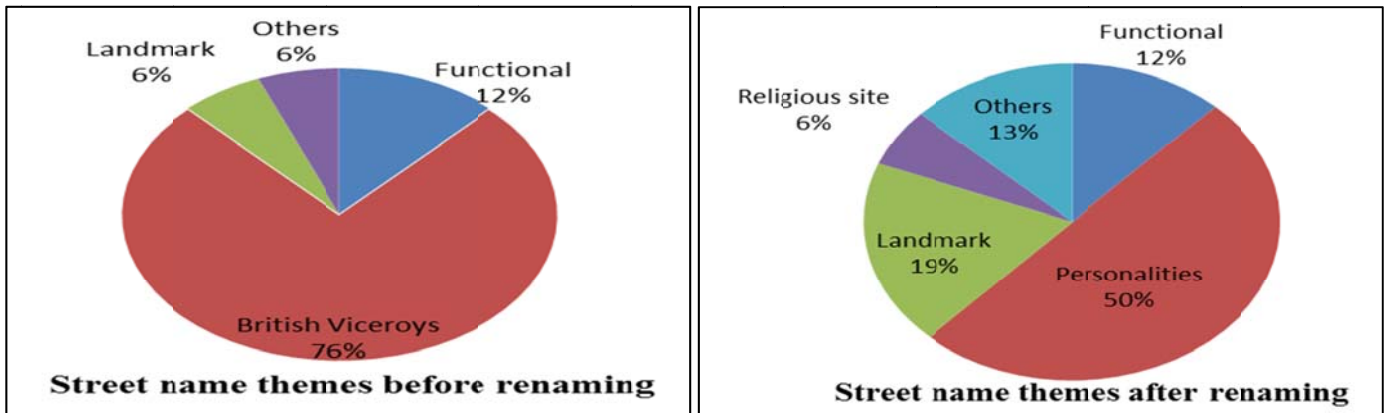


Source: Google images

Fig 4: Renaming of Dalhousie Road to Dara Shikoh Road

It is observed that streets which were named under a specific theme were also renamed under the same theme. The following

diagram shows the proportionate distribution of street names under different themes before and after renaming.



Source: Prepared by researcher

Fig 5: Comparison of Street name themes before and after renaming

Comparison of Themes for Street Naming: Before and After Independence

The major themes of naming streets during Mughal period were natural characteristics (geography, shape, size) or functional use in terms of economic activity. In the colonial time, the main themes were Landmarks, Viceroy/ Officials or functional use. But the major chunks of streets were named after Viceroy and other officials. Britishers named streets after resident Viceroy and councillors such as- Irwin road, Curzon road, Kitchener road, Hardinge Avenue etc.

The selection of suitable streets to honour individuals was a carefully calculated process aimed at ensuring that the length, location, and importance of the chosen street were commensurate with the esteem due the person. The abundance anglicised street names in premier suburbs for Europeans allowed the dents of the bungalows sequestered in park like expanses to escape press of the tropics and native culture and symbolically to exist in settings. Following is a table on number of streets named after different themes out of a total thirty selected streets in the study area.

Table 3: Themes for Street Naming in Colonial Period

Themes	Total Number of Streets (Out of 30 selected streets from the study area)
Landmark	1
Viceroy/Officials	12
Functional Use	2
Total	15

Source: Primary Survey

In Post-Colonial times, it was felt to name streets after the local leaders. Popular themes for naming streets are Landmarks, Dignitaries (Freedom fighters, Politicians and World Leaders), Kings/Kingdoms which once ruled Delhi and local geography. Out of these themes, the major portion belongs to dignitaries.

In the selected streets for the study, under the dignitary theme politicians have highest number of streets named after them, followed by freedom fighters. In the diplomatic enclave, the streets named after world leaders are highest in number followed by message giving theme named streets.

New Delhi Municipal Corporation official revealed that streets to be named after dignitaries are selected carefully so as to do justice with the legendary works of the Dignitaries. Therefore, the bigger the Personality in terms of their contribution to the nation/world, the bigger the streets in terms of its importance is allotted to them.

Conclusion

The process of street naming is not known for the Mughal Period. It was formalised during Colonial time when the municipalities were created. In present times, street naming in New Delhi district and Street Names Authority is the final body taking decisions on (Re) naming. In the Mughal period, streets were named after Kings/Queens but also a significant proportion of streets were named after functional activity of the street or nature theme was used. During the Colonial era, streets names were used as tools and symbols to honour mostly Viceroys who stayed in the city. Other officials serving at high posts in government and military leaders were also popular choices while naming streets

After Independence, the share of street names after politicians is rising steadily as compared to those after freedom fighters, scientists, artists etc. The diplomatic enclave-Chanakyapuri has always some streets reserved to be named after international personalities for diplomatic goodwill. Also, streets in this tehsil are named after message giving theme which is in sync with the land use of the place, that is, foreign embassies.

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