

## In our Neighbourhood

### Mai Sahiba ki Dargah | 780 years old

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**M**any of us have been to the 14th century Sufi saint Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya's dargah to seek his blessings; some of us have been there to listen to soul stirring Sufi Qawaals; and some others to dig into Mughlai food at Karim's in its vicinity. But how many of us have been to the place where Nizam (his mother called him thus) lived with his mother in Delhi?



Courtesy: Adityapathak.net

**Mai Sahiba ki Dargah**—a quaint clean shrine built over the grave of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya's mother Bibi Zulekha with a covered verandah and a mosque—lies somewhat hidden in the Adhchini maze. Once upon a time, the Dargah could apparently be seen from Mehrauli across the farmlands. The haphazard growth of Adhchini has dwarfed the Sri Aurobindo Marg entrance to the Dargah and congested its vicinity. Now, you can't see it from Sarvodaya or even from many parts of Adhchini itself.

Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya's father Khwaja Syed Ahmad died, leaving the family in penury, when Nizam (his mother called him thus) was just a toddler. Some years later Bibi Zulekha left Badayun and came to settle in Adhchini, Delhi with Nizam and her daughter, Bibi Jannat. She wanted Nizam to be educated here. Though the house they lived in was reasonable, some believe that the family struggled even for daily meals. Even as hunger stalked the family Mai Sahiba saw a good omen in Nizam's feet and talked to him about how God was preparing him for greater accomplishment. She talked to him about fasting as a way to spiritual nourishment. When there was no food to eat, she told him, "Nizam, today we are guests of Allah." She told him about the family's lineage to Prophet Muhammad and the responsibility to humanity that lineage cast upon him. Just as Nizam was beginning to explore Sufi mysticism more intensely, weakened by continuous fasting, Bibi Zulekha died in 1250 AD. Breathing her last, she called out to God and put Nizam in His care. She was laid to rest in her Adhchini house. Later, Bibi Jannat and two of Mai Sahiba's closest caretakers, Hoor and Noor, were also laid to rest by her side. Nizam (even after he became famous as Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya) used to visit her Dargah often to offer prayers.

Mai Sahiba's devotees (mostly women) offer red roses on her tomb particularly on Wednesdays and receive yellow rice as a mark of her blessings. It is said that she listens to the woes of women and gives them relief. Her 779th Urs was celebrated from March 9 to 11 this year. The Dargah was decorated with roses and for three days and nights qawwals from different countries sang Sufi devotional songs. Chanaa and aloo pulao, the dishes she liked, were distributed among devotees.

Though Mai Sahiba did not live long enough to see her son's rise to glory, Nizam surely would not have become Sultanul-Mashaikh, Mehboob-e-Ilahi, Hazrat Shaikh Khwaja Syed Muhammad bin Abdullah Al Hussaini Nizamuddin Auliya without her sacrifice, nurturing and blessings.

