

**Department of History and Culture  
Faculty of Humanities and Languages  
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi**

**Invites you to a lecture**

By

**Swapna Liddle**

On

***Popular Urdu Memoirs as a Source for the History of Pre-1857 Delhi***

**8 November, 2012 (Thursday)**

**12:15 PM**

**Venue: Seminar Room, Department of History and Culture, JMI**

Dr. Rizwan Qaiser, Department of History and Culture will chair the session

The Revolt of 1857 represents an important watershed in the history of Delhi. With the exile of Bahadur Shah, the curtain fell on an era half a century long. During this time, Akbar II and Bahadur Shah 'Zafar' had presided over the Mughal court, while the city was administered by the officials of the East India Company. Much of our understanding of this important phase derives from a reading of a large volume of popular literature in Urdu. Published from the last quarter of the nineteenth century through to the 1930s, these works were based on the memories of those who had lived through the decades before 1857. The authors include well-known names – Farhatullah Beg, Rashid ul Khairi, and Maulvi Zakaullah, among others. These works are written in a popular anecdotal style, rich in detail about the Mughal court and the city. But they provide a picture that is curiously static and one-dimensional. The colonial state is nowhere in evidence in these accounts, much less is any impact of western culture. As a result they encourage the impression that Delhi before 1857 was 'Mughal Delhi', minimally affected by colonial rule. How accurate is this picture, and why did these accounts foster it? Setting these works and their authors against their historical context, can provide some answers.

**About the Speaker**

Swapna Liddle wrote a PhD thesis on nineteenth century Delhi in the Department of History and Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia. She has a special interest in the historic landscape of Delhi, and the need to preserve old buildings. She volunteers for various organizations to increase public awareness in this field. She is currently Co-Convenor of the Delhi Chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). She has authored the book Delhi: 14 Historic Walks (Westland, 2011).