

### Dara Shukoh', Heritage Theatre by Darwesh

Darwesh, through its theatrical telling of Dara Shukoh's life will be recounting some known and lesser known tales that shaped the course of Dara Shukoh's life. The play will be enacted through six scenes which will be interspersed with music, light and poetry.

*Darwesh is a Delhi based storytelling organisation that presents Delhi through customised tones and performances integrate various artistic and interactive elements like theater and folk performances to bring to life an experience of Delhi that is vibrant, unique and eclectic.*

### Musical Arts of Delhi (17th and 18th centuries): Irfan Zuberi in conversation with Geetanjali Tyagi

'A Listening Session and Conversation on the Music of the 17th & 18th Centuries', by Irfan Zuberi, will be in conversation with Geetanjali Tyagi from Ambedkar University Delhi, on the different musical practices and transitions within musical traditions at the time.

*Irfan Zuberi has been involved with the arts for over 15 years as researcher, editor, festival & exhibition curator, audiovisual archivist, music consultant for documentary films & resource person. He is currently Project Manager, National Cultural Audiovisual Archives at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts & Chairperson, Steering Committee on Arts Management, Ministry of Culture, Government of India.*



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Centre for Community Knowledge,  
(Ambedkar University, Delhi)  
presents

## Dar-e-Shikoh: Dara Shikoh Festival of Delhi

### Schedule

**March 27th:** Festival opens | Dastangoi by Ankit Chadha in Collaboration with Supriya Gandhi | The Dara Shikoh Library: Worlds - Sound and Projections Around the Histories of the Building

**March 28th:** Listening session and talk on the musical arts of Delhi (17th and 18th centuries): Irfan Zuberi in conversation with Geetanjali Tyagi |

**March 30th:** 'Dara Shikoh', heritage theatre by Darwesh | The Dara Shikoh Library: Worlds - Sound and Projections Around the Histories of the Building

**March 31st:** 'Dara Shikoh', heritage theatre by Darwesh | The Dara Shikoh Library: Worlds - Sound and Projections Around the Histories of the Building

**April 3rd:** Dastangoi by Ankit Chadha in Collaboration with Supriya Gandhi | The Dara Shikoh Library: Worlds - Sound and Projections Around the Histories of the Building

**April 4th:** The Dara Shikoh Library: Worlds - Sound and Projections Around the Histories of the Building

**April 6th:** Dastangoi by Ankit Chadha in Collaboration with Supriya Gandhi | The Dara Shikoh Library: Worlds - Sound and Projections Around the Histories of the Building

Time: 6.30 PM - 8.30 PM  
Holidays on 29th March, 1st April and 2nd April

### Dara Shikoh and his Library

Dara Shikoh (1615-1659) was the eldest of the Mughal Emperor Shahjahan's four sons. In September 1642 Dara Shikoh was formally proclaimed heir by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan and given the title Shahzada-e-Buland Iqbal (Prince of High Fortune). Much of Dara Shikoh's life was dedicated to scholarly pursuits. He is best known in history for some of the pioneering work in the Indian subcontinent on comparative theology. His work *Sire-i-Akbar* is a Persian translation of a collection of 52 Upanishads. His interest in Sufism and Hindu monotheism is reflected in his book *Majama-ul Bahram* where he attempts to draw parallels between the two. His philosophical leanings towards religions outside Islam earned him the ire of many mullahs and of his younger, more orthodox brother Aurangzeb. The brewing resentment eventually culminated in a bloody war of succession between Dara Shikoh and his brothers. On August 29th 1659 Dara Shikoh was executed by Aurangzeb on the charge of being a heretic.

In 1639, when work on the new Mughal capital of Shahjahanabad began, Dara Shikoh set up his new palace at Kashmere Gate, north of the Red Fort. By 1643, the palace was complete with a library that he moved from his erstwhile library at Agra. After Dara's execution in 1659 the palace was gifted to Ali Mardan Khan, the Governor of Lahore. The accession of Bahadur Shah I (1707-12), son of Aurangzeb, saw the building being handed over to Juliana Dias da Costa, whose combination of piety and political power, continued even after her death in 1734. This residence remained with the family till Ahmed Shah's reign in 1748, at which time it was bought for a pittance, by his prime minister, Safdarjung. The 1761 pillage of Delhi by Ahmed Shah Abdali led to Lucia, the sole European survivor and grand-daughter of Juliana escaping to Faizabad, and ended the first European occupation of the building.

In 1803-32, the palace was occupied by the British Resident David Ochterlony. The palace was rebuilt in the British style with its facade hidden by large pillars, while a driveway and staircase added to the effect. The building went on to house the Delhi College from 1832 until the 1857 mutiny. The books of the library have been said to be destroyed in the mutiny. Immediately after, it served as the British artillery barracks.

Decades later the educational role of the building was revived to set up the famous Anglo-Arabic School, and eventually a teacher training school was added in 1906.

In 1947, the remaining books from the building were thrown out onto the roads, many were burnt while others were sold as junk. The Department of Archaeology (Government of Delhi) took final possession of the building in the 1980s. Every occupant or agency added on to its architecture. The English built the tall imposing Roman-style pillars as additions were made from two sides to the Mughal-era decorated sandstone arches inside the building. Today it stands as a site of engagement for Ambedkar University, Delhi's Kashmere Gate campus which occupies the area around it.

### Event Details

#### The Dara Shikoh Library: Worlds - Sound and Projections around the Histories of the Building

The sound, light and audio-visual projections around the Dara Shikoh Library attempt to explore an imagination of its multiple histories. These fragments of texts, images, sounds and readings have been composed, gathered, excavated, reconstituted and layered. The Library is vast and absent, its original inhabitant beheaded for apostasy, and forgotten. The Library, once a repository of knowledge and its proclaimed truths, now stands as a monument to its abandonment. Silent, all its histories and worlds given over to time.

*This is a collaborative effort by Priya Sen, Shaabkar Siddique and team.*

#### Dastangoi: Dastan Dara Shikoh Ki

Team Dastangoi presents a biographical piece on Dara Shikoh, conceived and scripted by Ankit Chadha in collaboration with Supriya Gandhi, to celebrate the 400th birth anniversary of the historical figure. Largely based on Supriya's biography in progress, the presentation revisits the format in which dastans were narrated in the Mughal court. Episodes in the narrative revolve around a set of paintings/images and Ankit's performance moves across this collection to portray the life of Dara Shikoh.

*Dastangoi is a 16th-century Persian and Urdu oral storytelling art form.*