



SOCIAL MEDIA
for EMPOWERMENT
SUMMIT & AWARD 2014



Social Media for Empowerment Awards 2014: An enthralling experience

161 nominees from 8 countries of the Asia-Pacific region competed aggressively to get awards in 9 categories

Eros Hotel, New Delhi

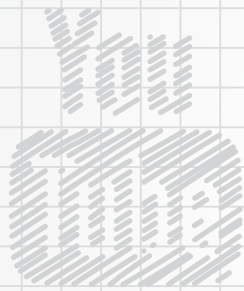
20th November 2014

Overview

Thanks to the generous support and encouragement of the American Centre, New Delhi, the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), New Delhi was able to initiate the Social Media for Empowerment Awards in 2013 as a dedicated platform to identify, honor, recognize and encourage innovations and best practices for the use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc in empowering people, especially women and children, differently-abled people and marginalized communities, and bringing about overall socio-economic transformation.

In the first year, the awards were restricted to nominations from India and proved to be a huge success with over 125 entries from all over India. Encouraged by that success, DEF and the American Centre decided to expand the scope of the 2014 awards and invited nominations not only from India but also from as many as eight other countries of South Asia and the Asia Pacific region. This year, DEF received a phenomenal 161 nominations out of which as many as 26 came from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and even from South Korea and the United States.

The nominations reflect the tremendous impact that social media is having on social transformation in various ways. Entries were received for as many as nine categories, namely, Women Empowerment, Crowd funding, Communication, Advocacy & Development Activism, Public Relations, Social Games & Entertainment, Citizen Journalism, Community Mobilization, Social Apps and Social Commerce. All the nominations highlight how people are now using social media not only for social networking and entertainment but also as a social change catalyst and as an advocacy tool for policy making. Social media today infiltrates almost every aspect of the daily lives of billions of people, affecting the way they interact socially, do business, interact with government, or engage in civil society movements.



Inaugural Session



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This year's award scheduled for two days, held on 20th and 21st November 2014, was graced by the presence of dignitaries from various countries and fields, who were all in praise of the underlying thought process and the services being offered through this enriching platform. The awards event, was kick-started by Mr Osama Manzar, Founder and Director, DEF who spoke about how the year old initiative has grown to become a separate entity from the Manthan Awards where earlier it was just a small session. Mr. Manzar also shared a video on the jury with the audience which had a short message wishing good luck to all the nominees.

Mr Manzar then invited Mr Gautam Chikermane, New Media Director, Reliance Industries, to initiate the inaugural panel discussion with his key note address. Mr Manzar also invited the other distinguished panelists, namely Ms Jessica Edwardsen, Press Officer and the Social Media Coordinator for the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, Mr Danish Karokhel, Founder & Director, Pajhwok Afghan News, Afghanistan, Ms Shayantani Twisha, Head of Communications, D.Net, Bangladesh, Mr Anil Prasad Ghimire, Marketing Technologist, Cloud Factory Nepal, Mr Pradeep Chopra, CEO, Digital Vidya and Mr Abdul Halik Azeez, Advisor, UN Youth Advisory Panel, Sri Lanka to give their views on some eight different aspects of the social media phenomenon. These aspects were:

How social Media has changed the landscape of the traditional media

How social media is challenging the Governance

How social media is affecting everyone's life

How social media has emerged in the South Asian countries

How
Social Media
has emerged as
a strong
communication
medium

Roles
of Social Media
in Socio-Economic
development

Social Media
success stories

Future of
social media
in the South
Asian
Countries.

While empowering citizens you are in the right side of the history but the history of Empowerment itself is determined with the resounding battle of the entrenchment.

*Gautam Chikermane, NewMedia Director,
Reliance Industries Studies*

In his key note address, Mr Chikarmane chose to speak on the topic *Disruption to Empowerment - A Future That Has Already Happened*. He focused on two phenomena concurrently. The first was the disruption that has happened due to new technologies and new way of doing things and how this has changed the entire landscape of society. The second was how this has brought about a great deal of empowerment right from the top through the various levels of government down to the bottom at the grass roots.

Lauding DEF's efforts at trying to empower people through digital inclusion and intervention he said "While empowering citizens you are in the right side of history, but the history of Empowerment itself is determined by its resounding battle against entrenchment."

In this context he touched upon how social media campaigns have helped to bring about disruptive politics and empowered ordinary citizens against entrenched political formations. He gave the example of the astonishing rise of Arvind Kejriwal and the Aam Admi Party who managed to come to power

in Delhi despite being an absolutely new party that was in the political fray only for a very short period of time. He also gave other examples of such successful social media campaigns like how the newly elected Chief Minister of Haryana Mr. Manohar Lal Khattar used social media to communicate with citizens in a case involving the Haryana Police. He ended by advocating greater use of social media as a tool for empowering all sections of society and catalyze better governance.



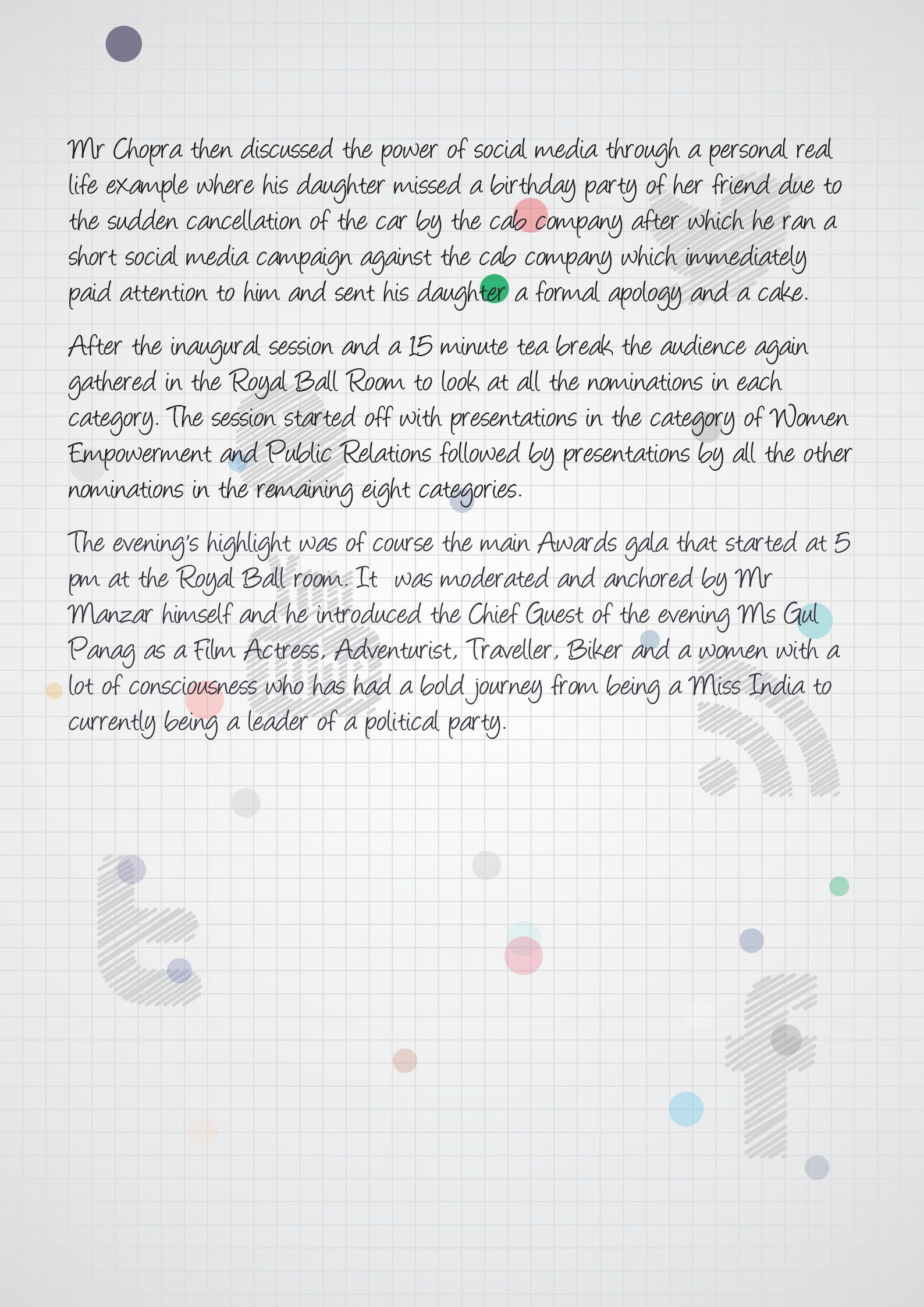
After the keynote address, Jessica Edwardsen of the US Embassy in New Delhi spoke about the power of social media in the United States which has the second largest number of internet users in the world. She also discussed how the landscape of social media has moved from known brands delivering content to a captive audience (subscribers) to unknown brands and personalities delivering content to a worldwide audience, from expert generated content to availability of unlimited user generated information and how users go about locating the information they need even if the information is buried under the mass of this unlimited information now available on the information highway.

She also shared a video of Mr Richard Stengel who is the "Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs" regarding a visit to a local school in India where he had an enlightening experience of how little girl students of the school learned to use internet and go online. He also emphasized the similarities between India and US and also mentioned that with the Indian Prime Minister laying stress on development, the relation between the two countries is bound to be further cemented.

Mr Karokhel then spoke about his early days of journalism working as a reporter in Taliban controlled areas when he used to have only a fax machine at his disposal for telecommunication purposes. Today he is the Director of a leading media agency in Afghanistan and uses the Internet and social media to collect and disseminate information.

Ms Twisha then spoke about the social media scenario in Bangladesh. She took the audience through the journey from 2005 when Yahoo groups and hi five came in to Bangladesh, 2005-2007 when social media blogs emerged together Facebook, Twitter, and Skype. She recalled that in 2013 a strong movement called the Shahbag movement which came into existence through Facebook. The movement was against the verdict of against a war criminal, who was not awarded the death penalty. The protests that spread throughout the country demanding the death sentence to Abdul Quader Mollah and banning of the Islamist party Jamaat -e-Islami. She also talked about the collapse of the Rana Plaza building which is considered to be the deadliest disaster in the history of the garment industry worldwide.


Mr Ghimire then talked about the social media landscape in Nepal and shared some of the most successful social media campaigns in his country like the Bucket challenge through which activists collected around 25 million buckets full of medicines, food and other basic necessities for the victims of a landslide in Nepal. He also share some Citizen Journalism social media campaigns which he described as digital story telling.



Mr Chopra then discussed the power of social media through a personal real life example where his daughter missed a birthday party of her friend due to the sudden cancellation of the car by the cab company after which he ran a short social media campaign against the cab company which immediately paid attention to him and sent his daughter a formal apology and a cake.

After the inaugural session and a 15 minute tea break the audience again gathered in the Royal Ball Room to look at all the nominations in each category. The session started off with presentations in the category of Women Empowerment and Public Relations followed by presentations by all the other nominations in the remaining eight categories.

The evening's highlight was of course the main Awards gala that started at 5 pm at the Royal Ball room. It was moderated and anchored by Mr Manzar himself and he introduced the Chief Guest of the evening Ms Gul Panag as a Film Actress, Adventurist, Traveller, Biker and a women with a lot of consciousness who has had a bold journey from being a Miss India to currently being a leader of a political party.



having an opinion is no good if one is not going to volunteer it to make it available for public consumption

Ms Panag then spoke about how she has been empowered by Social Media. She said that meeting like minded individuals makes her feel empowered. She enjoys a follower base of 1.07 million on twitter which describes her online influence very well. She emphasized on the point that having an opinion is no good if one is not going to volunteer it to make it available for public consumption. During her speech she used a lot statistics to make the point that although internet penetration was only 17-19% in India, we still have the third largest internet user base in the world and this presents a huge opportunity. She also felt that we can easily reach the top slot in a short span of time. She also quoted the example of popular professional social networking site LinkedIn which celebrated 20 million user base in India recently which she pointed out is as much as the population of Australia to emphasize the scale of our potential.

She also said the socio-economic divide that exists in India is definitely being bridged very quickly due to digital intervention. It is an unprecedented opportunity where voices are amplified for a cause by the people who are not directly at the forefront of a movement but are ready to lend their support for a cause. She also indicated that in India more and more women are getting online and marketers are realizing the ability of women's potential to drive decision making and they are tapping in to it.

She cited the massive penetration of smart phones which has also pushed the growth of social media as most of the internet users are getting online through smartphones that are now available at highly affordable prices. With the proliferation of social media, time to spend on ourselves is going to keep going down and the reaction time to an issue has been reduced dramatically and this will further drop down in the days to come.

Being a political leader herself she mentioned that Social Media and social activism is a great way our public and political discourse is taking place these days. The governments have been using social media to evaluate the success or failure of a campaign or even government policies and this gives a tremendous opportunity for a democracy for citizens to participate in the policy making process.

Her concluding remarks were that "Wherever large socio-economic gap exists social media is going to bridge that divide."

With that the announcement and felicitation of the winners was started and then the evening concluded with a group photograph of all the winners, Guest of Honors and the Chief Guest Ms. Gul Panag who was felicitated by presentation of a beautiful Chanderi saree and stole from Chanderiyagan, the e-enterprise of Chanderi weavers that DEF has helped to launch.

Experts & Winners Discussion

American Center, New Delhi

21th November 2014

Moderated by Mr. Osama Manzar the objective of day 2 was to meet with all the winners and experts to share and learn their experiences and suggestions about the event. And it proved to be a wonderful learning experience for all. The engagement started off with an introduction by all the participants followed by a short keynote by Ms Emily White program director at American Center thanking everyone for joining the two-day Social Media for Empowerment event.

After tea, participants began the discussions and several action points were finalized which would be implemented in the coming year. Suggestion with regard to the Summit/Event included: Winners of this year should be invited as Panelists for the next year, all the presenters should be given a longer time to make their presentations, the Social Media for Empowerment event should be hosted by a different country every year, Offline and Online workshops will be organized in February 2015 and that next year the event should be held in Nepal.

Suggestions regarding content included: Social Media for Empowerment awards should develop its own security standards and ethics for use of social media and a separate document should be drafted for social media ethics and security standards.

With regard to Networking, the suggestions included: A formal group/network should be formed to channelize social media for propagation of empowerment ideas, a system should be developed to implement these ideas so that the network can be action oriented, use of enterprise social software

like Yammar and others should be used for meeting and discussions, country representatives should be identified for Social Media for Empowerment Awards, country-wise groups of Social Media for Empowerment ambassadors/fellows should be formed, Social Media for Empowerment Awards should set up a 360 degree portal and country road shows should be held in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The meeting ended with the appointment of the following country

Nepal

Saurav Dhakal,
Director, Nepal InfoPark,
socialmedia activist, Nepal

Sri Lanka

Ashok Bharan,
Editor-in-chief,
Law Student Association
Sri Lanka

Afghanistan

Danish Karokhel,
Founder & Director,
Pajhwok Afghan News,
Afghanistan

Bangladesh

Shayantani Twisha,
Head of Communication,
D.net, Bangladesh

Heritage Walk

With an end to the discussion at the American Center all the participants kicked off the e-heritage walk in the 'Walled city Shahjahanabad', famous as Old Delhi.

Shahjahanabad which was built by the fifth Mughal Emperor, Emperor Shahjahan, in 1639 CE, has the wealth of history, culture, tradition, food, architecture, tales, customs and lifestyles. And to document this invaluable treasure trove into a website in order to amplify its accessibility, DEF and the cultural wing of UNESCO have partnered for a project called e-heritage.

The winners began the walk at Turkman Gate, which is one of the fourteen gates that leads into Old Delhi. The excitement on their faces was palpable. Alongside this walk, DEF is taking this opportunity to test its M-heritage App.

The participants were introduced to Mohammad Arif as their guide for the walk, who is a Senior Research Fellow with the e-heritage project.

As the participants entered the narrow streets of Old Delhi they felt as if they had entered a wormhole. In an instant it seemed we have gone back in time.

It was an overwhelming experience. One negotiates people constantly brushing past, three-wheeler cycle rickshaws appeared from nowhere, hawkers, school-children, men in and out of mosques. The participants were constantly taking pictures. Each time-worn house, structure, exquisitely carved persian doors and windows of Mughal era had a story to tell.

Ten minutes into the walk we reached a beautiful green mosque marked by a steep line-up of stairs. It is Kalan Mosque. Kalan Mosque was built during the reign of Emperor Feroze Shah by Wajeere-Azam Khan Jehan in 28th June, 1387 CE. The participants were transfixed by its architectural splendour.

Moving ahead, we entered further narrow lanes, these lanes are the lifelines of Old Delhi running through like veins. Once the participants were sucked into that labyrinth they discovered life in the most uninhibited form.

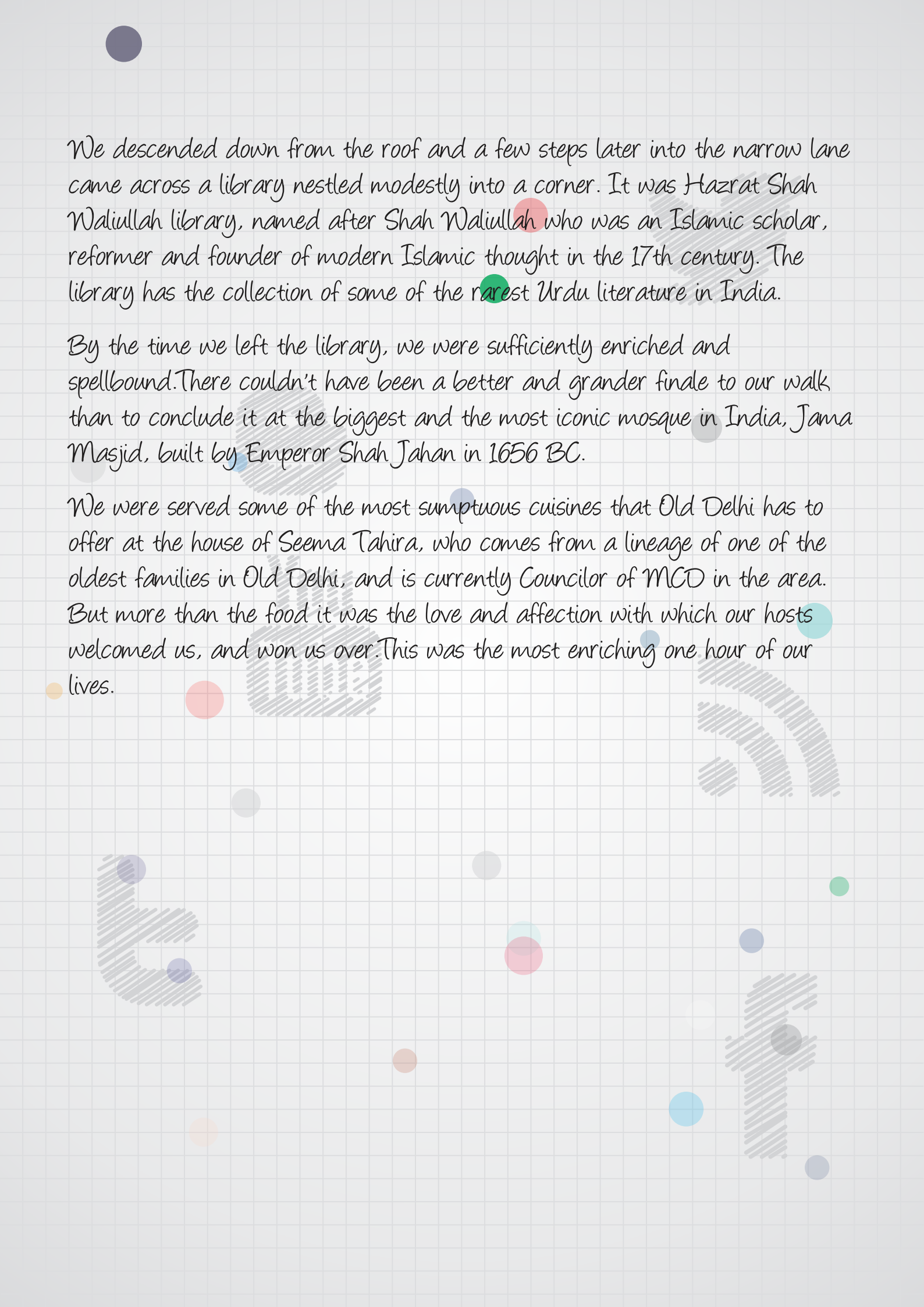
Now the group headed towards Pahadi Imli, which the highest point of Old Delhi. We ascended steep slopes, and climbed stairs which gradually but surely took us up, unsuspectingly intervened by an odd goat tethered next to a door.

And soon we were standing on the roof of the house that has the highest and the most priceless view of the walled city. The expanse of the area from that perspective was unimaginable with the grand presence of Jama Masjid looming over all other structures far and wide.

Another interesting view we witnessed was the many groups of pigeons jetting across the sky. Every now and then two groups flew through each other guided fervently by their human masters, who restlessly jumped on their roofs making strange noises. Arif told us that it's called pigeon-fighting.

Pigeon-fighting is a traditional sport that has lived on from the times of the Mughal Empire, when Emperors indulged in it in their leisure time. It is still practised on a competitive level in Old Delhi.





We descended down from the roof and a few steps later into the narrow lane came across a library nestled modestly into a corner. It was Hazrat Shah Waliullah library, named after Shah Waliullah who was an Islamic scholar, reformer and founder of modern Islamic thought in the 17th century. The library has the collection of some of the rarest Urdu literature in India.

By the time we left the library, we were sufficiently enriched and spellbound. There couldn't have been a better and grander finale to our walk than to conclude it at the biggest and the most iconic mosque in India, Jama Masjid, built by Emperor Shah Jahan in 1656 BC.

We were served some of the most sumptuous cuisines that Old Delhi has to offer at the house of Seema Tahira, who comes from a lineage of one of the oldest families in Old Delhi, and is currently Councilor of MCD in the area. But more than the food it was the love and affection with which our hosts welcomed us, and won us over. This was the most enriching one hour of our lives.

