

## **UNKNOWN STORY OF A MONUMENT**

*Ode to an unsung structure...*

*Salimgarh Fort...*

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This Old Delhi ruin is often considered to be the most haunted structure in the city. It was built in 1546 AD on a former island of the River Yamuna by Salim Shah Suri, son of Sher Shah Suri. It was built to commemorate the victory of Sher Shah Suri over the Mughal Emperor Humayun in 1540 AD.

A stream on one side and a mountain ridge on the other side of any fortification would be a formidable barrier for invaders to penetrate into Delhi, keeping these advantages in view the Salimgarh Fort was built.

The fort has the distinction of being the favorite torturing hub of the kings and emperors of Delhi!!! The fort has been compared to the Tower of London where state prisoners were either tormented to death or left to die in the prison.

Aurangzeb had imprisoned his brother Murad Baksh (whom he had caught unawares while sleeping after a drinking binge at Mutra) within the fort. It is also said that Aurangzeb, apart from imprisoning Murad Baksh, had the dubious credit of incarcerating his favorite eldest daughter Zebunnisa in the Salimgarh Fort for 21 years till her death.

Before India got Independence from the British rule, freedom fighters of the Indian National Army (INA) were also imprisoned and tortured in this fort from 1945 till India's independence in August 1947.

Ghosts are said to haunt the fort area and several stories are narrated in this regard. One of them relates to Zebunnisa wearing a black veil singing poems composed by her, on moonlit nights. Salimgarh Fort is now renamed as Swatantrata Senani Smarak in memory of the freedom fighters who died in this fort prison.