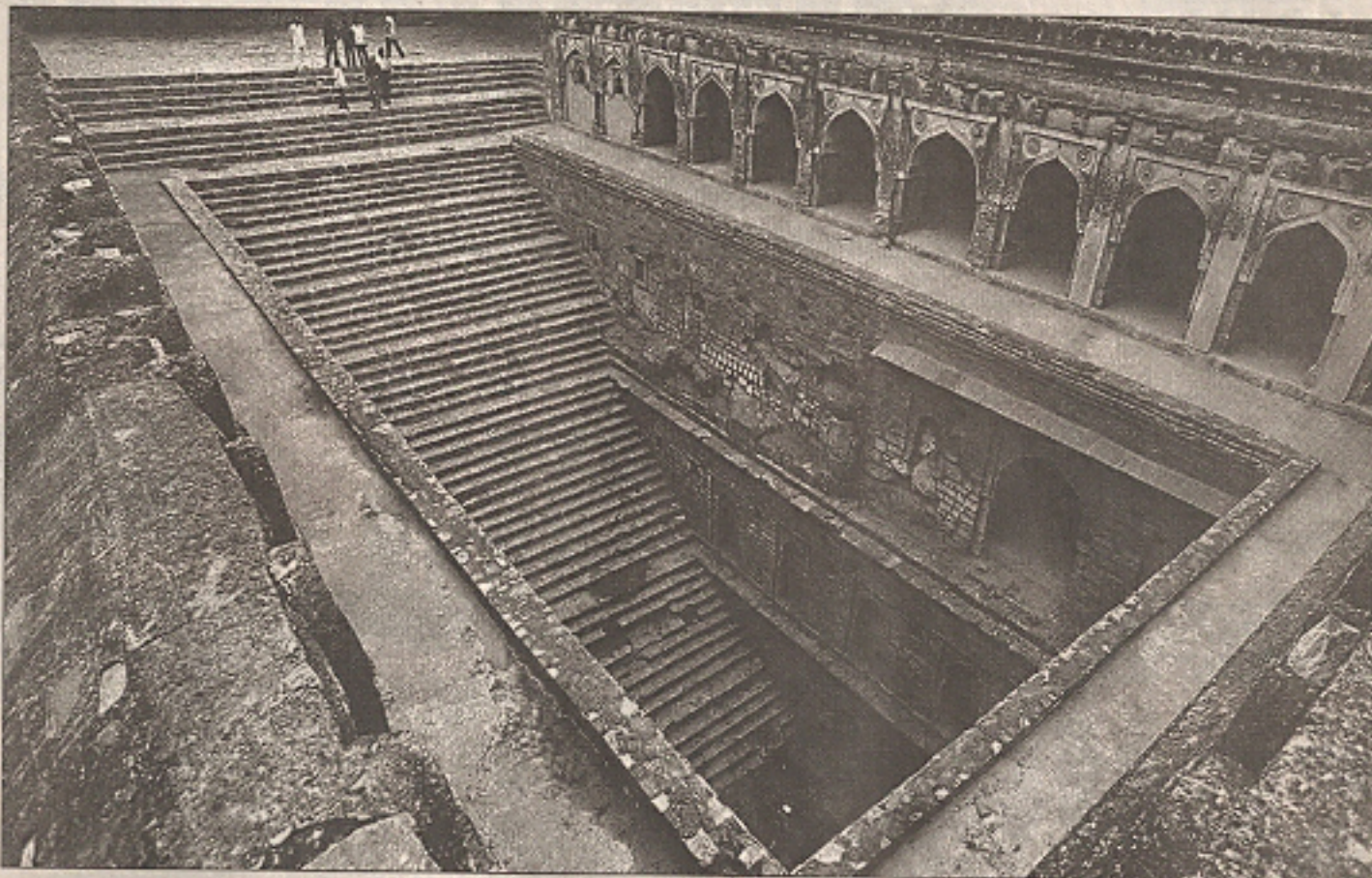


# Baolis: Depths of a dying history



PAST AND PRESENT: A baoli gone dry in Mehrauli. (Below) People take a dip in the one that still has water at Nizamuddin.

PICTURES: S. BURMA

## ASI moves to save Delhi's wells of heritage

Ramesh Adige

AT A time when water harvesting and water conservation have become priority areas, the Archaeological Survey of India has stepped in to do its bit. Medieval step wells, or *baolis*, are being restored in several parts of Delhi.

During the rains, water would accumulate in the well. During the dry months, people could reach down to the lowest level and access the water.

The *baolis* were also meeting places for the community. People often took a dip in the Nizamuddin *baoli* before going in to offer prayers at the *pir's dargah* — a practice that continues to today.

### All's well

Located in the precincts of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya's mausoleum, this is probably the only *baoli* in Delhi that is still widely used. It stays open from dawn till 7 p.m., and is used as a swimming pool by men and children. It has recently been de-sludged



by the ASI. The *baoli* is rectangular in shape and measures about 123 feet by 50 feet.

### Ends well

This 4-tiered step-well, also known as Rajon-Ki-Bain, is in Mehrauli, and has dried up completely. It was built during the reign of Sikandar Lodi in 1606 A.D. This 'Sookhi Baoli' is now being restored.

### Beyond repair?

The *baoli* built by Firozeshah Tughlaq at a place that now lies within the compound of the Bara Hindu Rao hospital, is in a state of great dilapidation. This is one site where the ASI will have to do much restoration work to bring it to its old glory. The *baoli* is used by the public as a lavatory.

Ramesh Adige is Director, Fiat India, and an avid naturalist.