

Lahore
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Lahore and the Lahoris

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There is great diversity among the residents on either side of the canal. Together, they give the city the touch that is its very own

men spend the day roaming in the all-too-full streets that tell a tale of ages past.

Come meal time and either *nihari* or *haleem* is served. With evening comes the lust for *samosay* and *pakoray*. Later, they gather at famous hang-out spots with buddies and pals.

Solitude and loneliness are rarely visualized by these ever-busy beings till they go to bed. One carved window lets the same air pass to the next, and to another, festive and carrying a silent message of unity. In short, a very full life, a serving of a complete lifestyle enriched by the frequent interaction of voices, still proud of their cultural heritage.

But just as there are always two sides to a coin, so there is another sentiment that haunts these grand walls

of inner Lahore. A fair number of residents feel the need to move out of the tightly-packed houses and streets. Desire and respect, they say, never go together. Those who desire to join the 'sophisticated' lot also try to leave the perennial rush, and so they must lose respect for what their fathers had cherished. The need for security, privacy and peace erects another side of the same city.

On the other part of the canal gather those who love peaceful surroundings. Men of all trades and likes are found here, too, but here they do not get up before 9am. Breakfast is served along with the newspaper and both are relished together. They must choose the attire that suits their engagements each day, and that, too, within half-an-hour. In

office, they work till 5pm, their sandwich an apology for lunch. They reach home and turn the idiot box on, and relish the emptiness after loads of chores. They might go out to Freddy's (the former go to Sardar Machhee House). And to invite sleep they devour pills, and make sure they go to bed by 1am.

Oldies both from the new and the old Lahore still love to go to book shops. They keep standing for hours looking for all that has arrived in a week. Afterwards, they buy a book or two and read it while sipping coffee as they go to bed. The increased pace of life develops in them the urge to stay a little away from tremendous activity. But still, they know wherever they go they must take that something along which is in their constitution. Once a Lahori, always a Lahori.

Despite differences, cars are loved both by the ultras and the intras. While the former live by playing Shaggy and J.Lo, the other relish Nargis and Naseebo. Mobile phones are equally important a possession.

In a blend of hues that make a rainbow is the very magic of the city itself: magnificent monuments, beautiful wide roads, splendid buildings and vibrant citizens. It just needs an adoring eye to see all that fills one with joy: the Government College elevation, National College of Art's statues, Kinnaird College's palm trees (and wardens of course), the Mall, etc.

The canal still charms those who see its shady vistas mirrored on their journey to the centre of the city. An artifice too real to be artificial: an artifact made alive in the prism of synchronization. Sometimes, it is difficult indeed to know the dancer from the dance.

IT IS the city of those who know the unconquerable worth of heritage, traditions and customs. It is a cultural nexus of all thoughts, practices and beliefs. It is a city seeped in history. "*Lahore, Lahore hai*" is a statement that is more of an adage now, leaving the city free to be felt, analyzed and admired.

Lahoris, on close examination, are altogether a different entity, living in a particular moment in time and sharing so much in their diversity that it becomes difficult to distinguish the peculiarity of mysterious Lahore. And of this emblem of communal continuity, a significant portion of thought ought to be given to the people who inhabit it.

It is only in the heart of the city that one can find the taste of distinctiveness that has defined Lahoris for decades. In the old city area of Lahore, young men get up at about 6am from the rooftops, get dressed and go about their daily business. Breakfast consists of *lassi* and *halwa puri*. Then comes meeting the neighbours for they constitute what is called a *muhalla*. Each *muhalla* shares a very thin boundary with another. Hence, a kind of mixed series of modification and intermingling. Young

