

# RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN

and the Central Vista

A PEOPLE MUST RAISE THEMSELVES TO LIBERTY; IT IS A BLESSING

LIBERTY WILL NOT DESCEND TO A PEOPLE,

THAT MUST BE EARNED BEFORE IT CAN BE ENJOYED

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DELHI HERITAGE



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Delhi is not one city, but many. In the 3,000 years of its existence, the name 'Delhi' (or Dhillika, Dilli, Dehli,) has been applied to these many cities, all more or less adjoining each other in their physical boundary, some overlapping others. Invaders and newcomers to the throne, anxious to leave imprints of their sovereign status, built citadels and settlements

here like Jahanpanah, Siri, Firozabad, Shahjahanabad ... and, eventually, New Delhi. In December 1911, the city hosted the Delhi Durbar (a grand assembly), to mark the coronation of King George V. At the end of the Durbar on 12 December, 1911, King George made an announcement that the capital of India was to be shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. There were many reasons behind this decision. Calcutta had become difficult to rule from, with the partition of Bengal and the growing antipathy towards foreign rule amongst Bengal's educated and conscious elite. What was more, Delhi had been, for centuries, a major centre of power. Ever since Shahjahan had shifted the Mughal capital from Agra to Delhi, Delhi had remained, uninterrupted, the seat of the Mughals. It was time to recognize the importance of Delhi all over again. Like the numerous dynasties that had ruled Delhi over the years, the British realized the need to build their own city here, New Delhi. Before he returned to England, King George laid the foundation stone of the new city at the grounds where the Durbar had been held (present day Coronation Park). The area was later vetoed as a site for the city, because the ground proved too susceptible to waterlogging. In the meantime, though, Lord Crewe of the India Office in London, after

many deliberations, decided on two architects to design New Delhi. Edwin Landseer Lutyens, till then known mainly as an architect of English country homes, was one. The other was Herbert Baker, the architect of the Union buildings at Pretoria.

Lutyens' vision was to plan a city on lines similar to other great capitals of the world: Paris, Rome, and Washington DC. Broad, long avenues flanked by sprawling lawns, with impressive monuments punctuating the avenue, and the symbolic seat of power at the end—this was what Lutyens aimed for, and he found the perfect geographical location in the low Raisina Hill, west of Purana Qila).

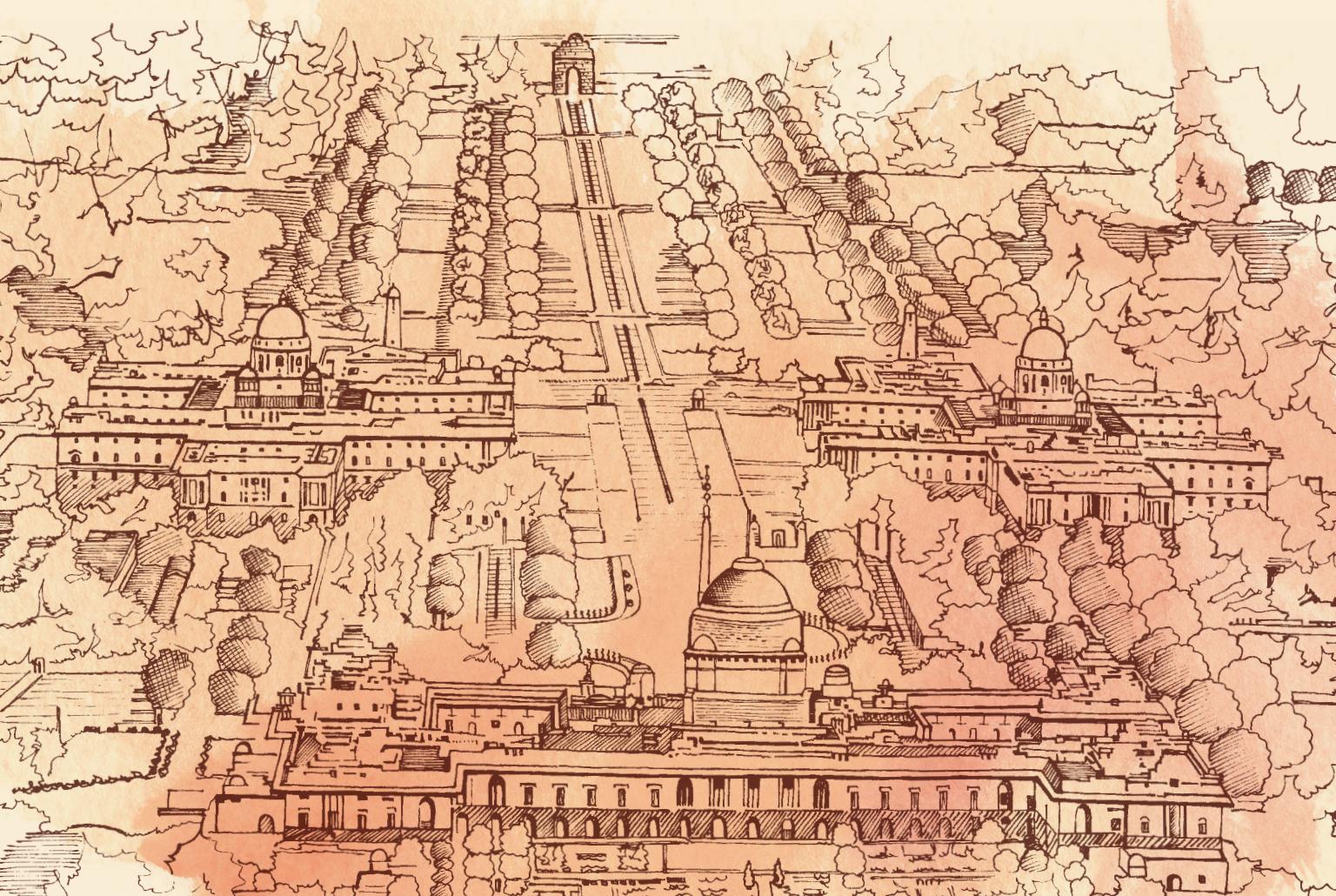
Lutyens noticed that a straight line could connect Raisina Hill to Purana Qila (thus, symbolically, connecting the old with the new). This hill, therefore, became the focus of Lutyens' and Baker's plans for the new city. New Delhi was developed on a geometric design—mainly the use of hexagons and triangles—and had, as its core, the central vista. As per the plans, atop Raisina Hill would stand the Government House (today, Rashtrapati Bhavan). Below it would be the main offices of the government, the Secretariat (this relative location had to be changed later, as you will see). From Government House, a long wide avenue—King's Way (Rajpath) would sweep down the hill and away into the distance, in the direction of Purana Qila. Midway would be a grand memorial arch, à la Paris's Arc du Triomphe (today, this arch is India Gate). On either side, connected by straight roads at precise angles to King's Way, would be other government and public buildings, all

impressive proofs of British imperial authority.

What emerged from years of work is today acknowledged as one of the most impressive imperial cities to have ever been built. Lutyens and Baker, both firm believers in the ‘perfection’ of classical western architecture, had been inclined to create resoundingly European buildings in Delhi. But the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, wanted Indian architectural elements included (it was also a matter of politics – the Indian national movement was growing stronger, and it was important to appease the populace). Hardinge’s advisor on the city’s design, Henry Lanchester, also played an important part in suggesting ways to connect the new city with the old – for instance, by integrating old structures (Jantar Mantar and Agrasen ki Baoli in Connaught Place are

prominent examples) into the fabric of New Delhi.

The plans for New Delhi were finalized in March 1913. It took nearly twenty years to build it all, a city to accommodate 60,000 people (nearly 17,000,000 live in Delhi today), a city painstakingly built from scratch. Lawns were planted, trees carefully selected (in many cases imported, such as jacaranda) for their adaptability to Delhi’s harsh climate and their visual appeal. A dusty stretch south of Shahjahanabad was converted into a city of gardens, grand buildings, and bungalows. New Delhi was thus born. On 13 February, 1931, the Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin, inaugurated New Delhi: a city that has endured, despite the many changes it has undergone in the decades since.



## 1. RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN

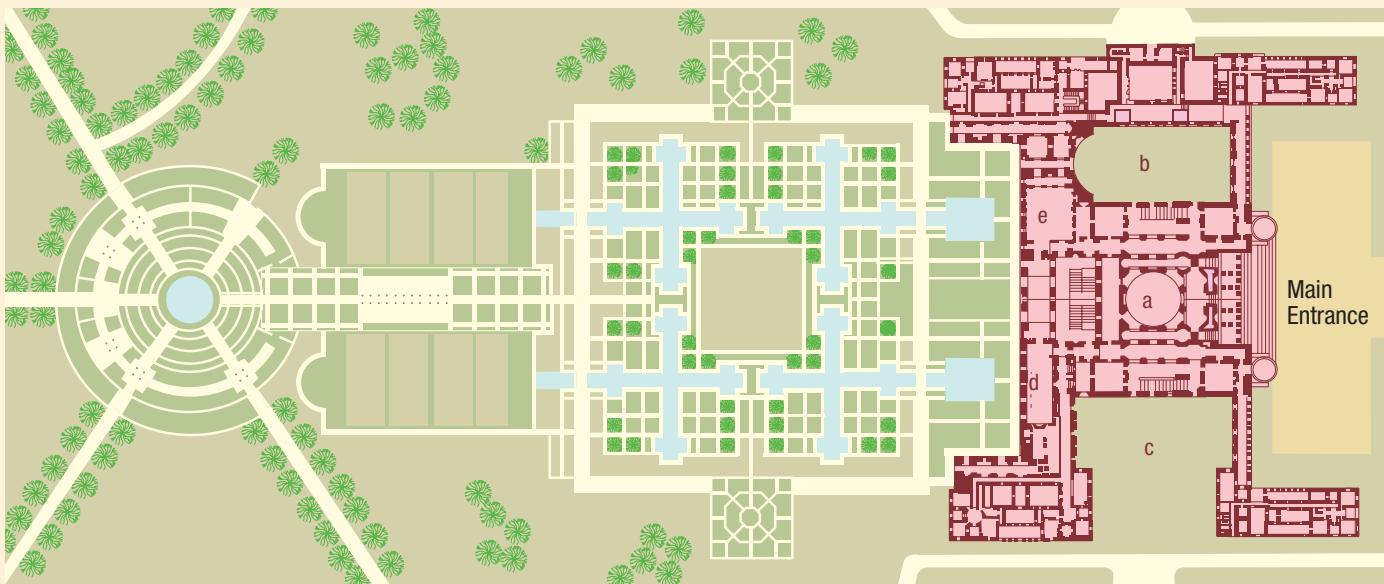
Rashtrapati Bhavan (literally, ‘President’s House’, the official residence of the Indian President) was designed as the residence of the Viceroy. It was envisaged as the crowning glory of the central vista of Imperial Delhi: the monument towards which would naturally be drawn the eyes of any visitor to King’s Way or its surrounding area. Edwin Lutyens took on the task of designing this building, then known as Government House or the Viceroy’s House and 29,000 workers were employed on the project. Construction began in 1914 and continued till 1927; but the end product, the largest residential complex ever built for a head of the state anywhere in the world, is impressive enough to justify the time, effort, and money spent on it.

Initial discussions for the plans of the central vista had envisioned the Government House (designed by Lutyens) alone atop Raisina Hill, looking down on the city below. It was however decided at some point that the Secretariat buildings (designed by

Lutyens’ associate and friend Herbert Baker) would also be placed on the hill. While it appears that Lutyens agreed to this proposal, it soon became clear that the Government House located 400 yards beyond the Secretariat, would be hidden from view as one approached the complex. Lutyens suggested modifying the slope up to the Government House, but this was not acceptable because it would divide the square between the two blocks of the Secretariat. Lutyens lost the battle, and one can see that if one approaches Raisina Hill along Rajpath, from a distance Rashtrapati Bhavan can be seen on the horizon, but it disappears behind Raisina Hill as one arrives at the base of the hill (today known as Vijay Chowk). The building reappears again, its dome unveiled a little at a time, as you ascend Raisina Hill.

The architecture of Rashtrapati Bhavan is an interesting example of Imperial architecture designed during a period of growing anti-colonial feeling. It is an awe-inspiring structure, a stolid symbol of British imperialism (interestingly, its façade is the same length—630 ft—as that of Buckingham Palace). It is, however, also a sign of the times: early twentieth century India was simmering with anti-British sentiment, and a need to show some respect for Indian tradition meant that this grand new building had to be more than just a European edifice sitting grandly in an Indian setting.

- a Durbar Hall
- b North Court
- c South Court
- d State Dinning
- e Ball Room



Lutyens, a fervent believer in the superiority of western architecture over Indian, had been intending to give the building a classic European appearance; the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, however insisted that Indian elements be incorporated in the design. Lutyens therefore spent time travelling across India, trying to find elements in indigenous architecture that would fit with classical western designs. You can see the result all across Rashtrapati Bhavan. Sometimes it's an odd fit, as in the kitschy metallic cobras around a fountain in the south court. Often, it's something very markedly Indian, such as carved stone elephants, or small domed pavilions (*chhatris*). Mostly, however, you may walk under *chhajjas* (dripstones) or over a marble floor inlaid with coloured stone, or you may see elegant floral-carved stone *jalis* (screens)—without realizing that these are all Indian architectural elements.

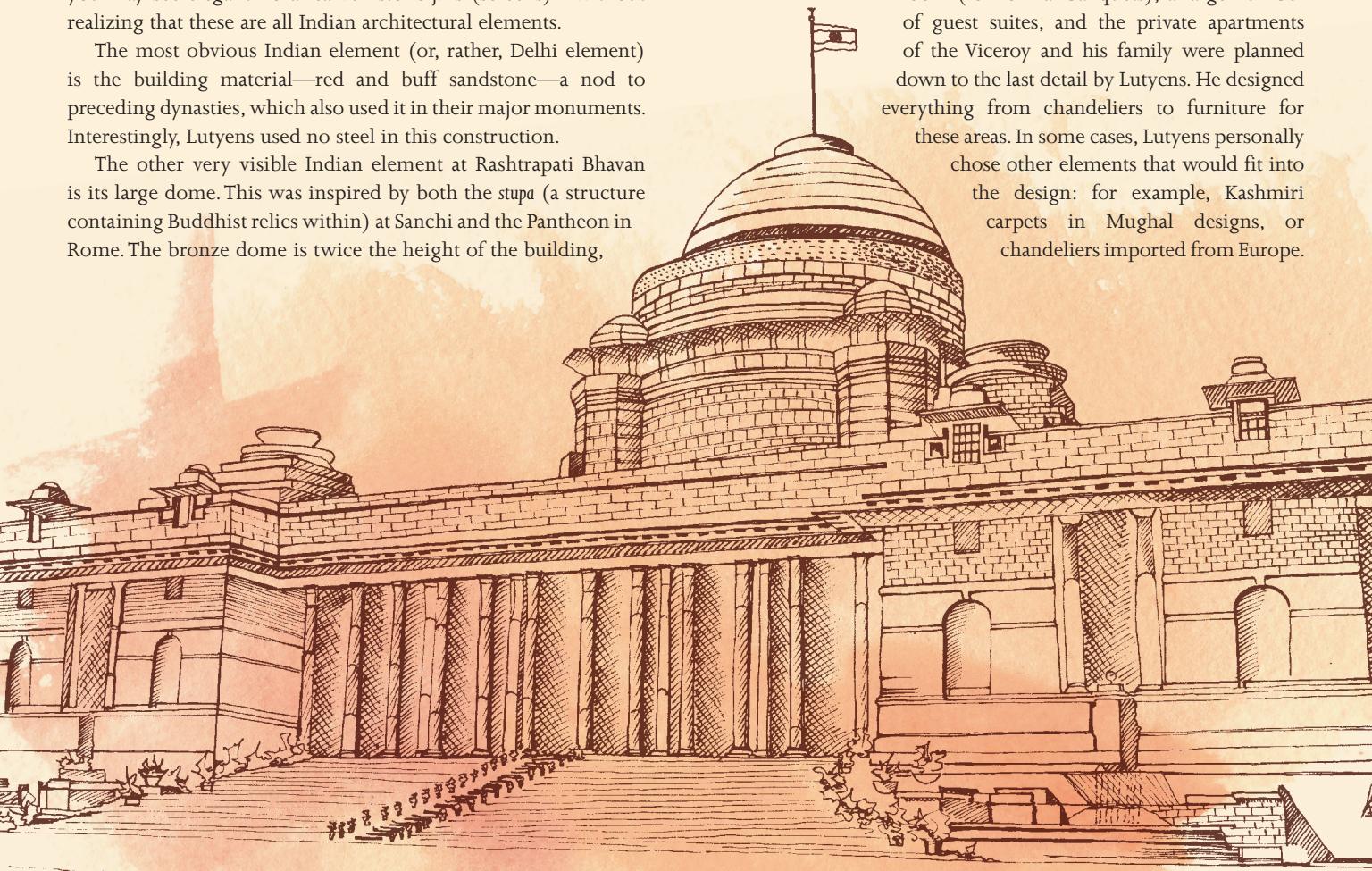
The most obvious Indian element (or, rather, Delhi element) is the building material—red and buff sandstone—a nod to preceding dynasties, which also used it in their major monuments. Interestingly, Lutyens used no steel in this construction.

The other very visible Indian element at Rashtrapati Bhavan is its large dome. This was inspired by both the stupa (a structure containing Buddhist relics within) at Sanchi and the Pantheon in Rome. The bronze dome is twice the height of the building,

staggeringly disproportionate, some would say, though that effect is balanced by the sheer length of the façade. The influence of the Pantheon is better appreciated when you're inside Rashtrapati Bhavan's Durbar Hall, which lies below the dome. Here, looking up, you can see the large oculus (the circular opening in the centre of the dome). You can also see that the ceiling of the circular Durbar Hall is lined with hemispheres that mirror the distinctive square-patterned carving of the Pantheon's ceiling.

The Durbar Hall was, and is still, used for major state functions. Another important hall in the Rashtrapati Bhavan is the Ashoka Hall, formerly the ballroom, its walls and ceiling painted with scenes from Persian poetry. These two halls, the State Dining

Room (for formal banquets), a large number of guest suites, and the private apartments of the Viceroy and his family were planned down to the last detail by Lutyens. He designed everything from chandeliers to furniture for these areas. In some cases, Lutyens personally chose other elements that would fit into the design: for example, Kashmiri carpets in Mughal designs, or chandeliers imported from Europe.





Lutyens designed another major component of the Rashtrapati Bhavan Estate: the Mughal Gardens that sprawl over 13 acres behind the building. Lady Hardinge, the Vicerene, had a say in the design of these gardens, as can be seen by their obvious resemblance to terraced Mughal gardens like Shalimar and Nishat in Kashmir. As in the traditional Mughal garden, there are water channels and pools, chhatris, parterres, and carved fountains—although the design of ornate fountains here, carved as numerous interlocking circles, is not traditional. The Mughal Gardens are a grand horticultural achievement too, with more than 250 varieties of roses, and probably the world's largest collection of marigold species, besides an array of bougainvillea, dahlias, and other flowers. In recent years, a small bonsai garden and a herb garden have been added to the Mughal Gardens. An amusing bit

of trivia: the carved circles in the stone screens of the tennis courts here were designed personally by Lutyens – the circles resembling his spectacles!

After India's independence in 1947, the last Governor-General, C. Rajagopalachari, stayed on at the Rashtrapati Bhavan until 1950, when the republic's first President, Rajendra Prasad, shifted into the building. Rashtrapati Bhavan contains 340 rooms, of which only a few rooms are occupied by the President and his/her family. The others are used as offices, display galleries, storerooms, and so on.

Casual tourists can look in and take photographs through the wrought-iron gates (also, incidentally, designed by Lutyens) of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. In order to tour the building, you need to book a tour a few days in advance. Even then, you will be escorted by an official guide and can visit only a handful of rooms, which include the Durbar Hall, the Ashoka Hall, and some of the rooms that have been converted into galleries housing Rashtrapati Bhavan memorabilia.

In front of Rashtrapati Bhavan, you can see a 145 ft high column of buff sandstone, topped with a bronze lotus and a glass star. Inspired largely by Trajan's Column in Rome, this is known as the Jaipur Column. Though designed by Lutyens, it was erected under the aegis of the Maharaja of Jaipur, to whom much of the land on which New Delhi was built originally belonged. The plan of New Delhi, with its major axes marked out, is carved onto the plinth of the Jaipur Column.

Visitors with prior appointments are allowed into Rashtrapati Bhavan on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, from 9.45 am–noon, and from 2.30 pm–4 pm.

The President's Bodyguards hold a ceremonial change of guard every Saturday, starting 10.35 am in winter and 8.30 am in summer, beginning at Rashtrapati Bhavan and proceeding till the Secretariat. This can be viewed and photographed from outside the gates of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

All tours are free of charge.

The general public is allowed into the Mughal Gardens only from mid–February to mid–March, every year, when spring turns the gardens into one of Delhi's finest displays of flowers. For this duration, the Gardens are open—free of charge—between 10 am–4 pm every day except Mondays.



## 2. NORTH BLOCK AND SOUTH BLOCK

While Lutyens was designing the Government House, Herbert Baker was working on the design of the Secretariat buildings. These buildings, two identical blocks facing each other across King's Way, were to house (and still do) important ministries of the government. It was essential, therefore, that they form a composite whole with Government House, the entire (so to say) 'supreme power' looming imposingly on Raisina Hill.

Differences arose between Baker and Lutyens regarding the placement of the Secretariat and Government House on Raisina Hill, and caused never-ending acrimony between them. Despite that, however, Baker and Lutyens managed to create a harmonious set of buildings. Like Rashtrapati Bhavan, the two buildings (North Block and South Block) of the Secretariat are made of buff and red sandstone, with the red sandstone forming a broad 'base' for the outer walls. As Lutyens did in Rashtrapati Bhavan, in the Secretariat too Baker used a combination of European and indigenous architectural elements. The semi-circular arches, the Corinthian columns, and the baroque dome are unmistakably western; the carved elephants and lotuses, red sandstone jalis, chhajjas, and the chhatris on the terraces are just as obviously Indian.

In a nod to Mughal architecture, Baker designed the main entrances of both blocks to resemble a traditional Mughal gateway. If you've seen the tomb of Humayun (near Nizamuddin, in Delhi), you'll note the same details here: a small arched doorway, set into a much larger (also arched) gateway. As in Humayun's Tomb, here too circular medallions decorate the inner corners of the archway, and a small, ornate balcony projects above the inner door.

The North and South Blocks sit on a plinth about 30 ft above the ground and are connected by an underground passage (still in use). Between them, the four-storied Secretariat buildings have about 4,000 rooms, several inner fountain courts, and miles of corridors. Both blocks have original paintings decorating some walls and ceilings. The North Block, for example, boasts of allegorical depictions of justice, war, and peace; the South Block has paintings of Indian cities and emblems of older kingdoms.

Outside each block are two sandstone columns—a total of four columns in the Secretariat. These, known as the Columns of Dominion, were ceremonial gifts to India from the colonies of Britain which had dominion status: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa. Each column is topped by a bronze ship in sail (to symbolize Britain's maritime traditions). The ship rests on a replica of the Ashoka Capital: a lotus blossoming above a wheel, flanked by a horse on one side and a bull on the other.

Today, the South Block is home to the Prime Minister's Office, and the ministries of Defence and External Affairs. The ministries of Finance and Home Affairs occupy the North Block. Because of the high security here, no casual visitors are allowed into either building. You may, however, walk along Rajpath and see (and photograph) the outside of the buildings. On 29th January every year, the open space at the base of Raisina Hill, known as Vijay Chowk, becomes the venue for the Beating of the Retreat, marking the culmination of the Republic Day celebrations. The Secretariat buildings are illuminated for the occasion, creating one of the most picturesque views of Imperial Delhi as it is today.



### 3. INDIA GATE

In keeping with the concept of an impressive central vista, Lutyens and Baker envisaged a massive memorial arch to form one of the structures of the main axis, that is the King's Way. The 'All India War Memorial' would be to King's Way what the Arc du Triomphe is to the Champs Élysées.

The monument was built as a memorial to Indian soldiers killed in battle during the First World War. The inscription at the top of the arch reads: 'To the dead of the Indian armies who fell honoured in France and Flanders, Mesopotamia and Persia, East Africa, Gallipoli, and elsewhere in the near and the far-east, and in sacred memory also of those whose names are recorded and who fell in India or the north-west frontier and during the Third Afghan War.' The names of 90,000 men who died during these conflicts are inscribed on the uprights of the arch. (Over the decades since its construction, this has come to be a memorial for Indian soldiers in other wars as well, including the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 and the Kargil war of 1999. This is in addition to the names of soldiers awarded the Param Vir Chakra, India's highest military decoration).

Lutyens had begun designing the memorial arch before the First World War began. The war, however, delayed the project. The Duke of Connaught finally laid the foundation stone of the memorial during his visit to Delhi in 1921. Work began the same year and continued till 1931.

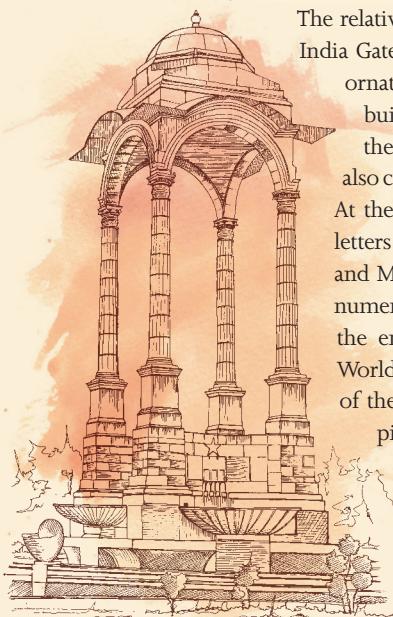
The relatively plain façade and clean lines of India Gate lie in sharp contrast to the more ornate appearance of the Secretariat buildings or Rashtrapati Bhavan. Like these buildings, though, India Gate is also composed mainly of buff sandstone. At the top of the arch are inscribed the letters INDIA, with MCMXIV on the left and MCMXIX on the right—the Roman numerals indicating the beginning and the end, 1914 and 1919, of the First World War. Between the narrower sides of the columns are two large sandstone pine cones, symbolizing eternal life.

Topping the arch is a shallow dome with a bowl to be filled with burning oil on anniversaries to commemorate martyrs. A similar structure was



installed under the arch, where oil was ceremonially burnt on the anniversary of the memorial's inauguration. While oil is rarely lit in the bowl above the arch, the bowl below the arch was replaced, in 1970, with an 'eternal flame', burning constantly in memory of India's dead soldiers. This is in the form of a plain square shrine of black marble, atop a stepped platform of red stone. From the centre of the black shrine rises an upturned bayonet supporting a helmet, a symbol of the unknown soldier. On each of the corners of the red stone platform is a constantly-alight flame. The shrine is known as the Amar Jawan Jyoti (literally, 'Flame of the Immortal Warrior'). The words 'Amar Jawan' is also inscribed in gold on all four sides of the shrine.

Just beyond India Gate is a domed, tall-columned canopy, standing in the middle of a large pool of water and built to commemorate King George V. Lutyens drew his inspiration for this from an ornate pavilion at Mahabalipuram. It originally housed a white marble statue of George V, shifted to Coronation Park in 1968. Since then, there have been suggestions to install other statues—including Mahatma Gandhi's—under the canopy. These have been dismissed as being contrary to the nature of the canopy and the central vista.



## AVENUE PLANTATION IN NEW DELHI



Neem Tree

The land chosen by the architects of the imperial city, Lutyens and Baker as suitable for New Delhi was a stretch south of the walled city of Shahjahanabad. On its western boundary, it was hemmed in by the Delhi Ridge; to the east was the Yamuna. In the middle stretched an area littered with old ruins and used largely for agriculture.

This, according to Lutyens' vision of a 'Garden City', was to be the site of impressive

government buildings (Government House, the Secretariat, the Indian War Memorial arch, and the palaces of Princes' Park among them). The city would also incorporate earlier historic monuments, such as the Purana Qila. The entire stretch of the old and new spaces was to be connected by a geometric network of avenues, with King's Way (present-day Rajpath) and Queen's Way (present-day Janpath) being the main axes.

But in a city supposed to impart the feel of a garden, avenues could not be left bare or simply flanked by pavements. It was essential that trees be planted along each avenue: trees that would provide a soothing greenery to counteract Delhi's dry and dusty environs, trees that would be shady and cooling, and which would – very importantly – 'frame' the most impressive landmarks of the new city.

This, obviously, required a great deal of careful design and planning. The people largely responsible for planning New Delhi's avenue plantations included Lutyens, William Robert Mustoe (the Director of Horticulture), and, to some extent, Captain George Swinton (the Chairman of the Town Planning Commission). Assisted by other town planners, foresters, and horticulturists, they began defining the types of trees to be planted. Trees, unless they were on traffic islands, could not be large and spreading, since they would impede all-important 'views' of the buildings around. Delhi is notoriously dry, so drought-resistant trees were needed. And, very importantly from the point of view of aesthetics, trees had to be preferably evergreen.

Much research and discussion followed, culminating in a list of thirteen species of trees for avenue plantation. Of these, eight species (including common Indian trees like the jamun, neem,

arjuna, pipal, and tamarind) were the most commonly planted. In addition, one imported species (the African sausage tree) was chosen for plantation.

Besides selecting the species to be planted, Lutyens and Mustoe planned the spacing of the trees along the avenues, how and where different species could be planted along a single stretch, and how trees could be grouped or spread out to best showcase the structures of New Delhi, especially the central vista. The tree plantations in and around the central vista were planned with exceptional care. To carry forward the symmetry that characterized the buildings of the central vista, Lutyens and Mustoe ensured that only one major species (the jamun) was planted along the avenues of this area.

Similarly, matching tree species surround and lead up to important government buildings like the Government House (Rashtrapati Bhavan), the Secretariat, and the Law Courts. In addition, the grandest trees were used along avenues leading to the major buildings, while lesser avenues – for instance, some in the 'bungalow zone' where officials had their residences – were lined with less imposing tree species. To maximize the effect of the 'Garden City', and to create continuity between one area and the next, the same tree species were often planted along roads that converged or intersected.

Avenue plantation began between 1919-20, with the last trees being planted approximately five years later. By the time the Secretariat and Government House were inaugurated, many of the trees had grown much as Lutyens and Mustoe had envisaged in their plans. Even today, nearly ninety years later, the avenue plantation of New Delhi is among the finest in the world.



Avenue lined with neem and jamun trees around Rajpath



## NEW DELHI AS A GARDEN CITY

Following the decision, in 1911, to shift the capital from Calcutta to Delhi, a Town Planning Committee was set up, with Edwin Lutyens (later to be joined Herbert Baker) at its helm. Baker was best-known for having designed the Union Government buildings at Pretoria. Lutyens was known mainly for his work in designing English country houses, and, more significantly, as it proved in the case of New Delhi, for having planned Hampstead Garden Suburb in London's Hampstead Heath.

Lutyens' design of Hampstead Garden Suburb was a combination of geometric residential areas, twin churches flanking an imposing central building, avenues planted with trees, and gardens that complemented both buildings and avenues. It formed a composite zone that was dominated by a few important structures and, at the same time, had a feel of being surrounded by nature – a place where the 'city' merged with the 'countryside'. In other words, a 'Garden City'.

The concept of the Garden City was allied, in the case of New Delhi to certain other movements in the western world. The main features Lutyens incorporated were sweeping boulevards; impressive monuments; avenues lined with trees; a well laid out plan pattern for residential, commercial, and administrative buildings; and an axial centre that would tie all of this together. Paris, particularly as designed by Baron Hausmann, also had broad avenues and important public spaces. In fact, Paris, with the Champs Élysées forming the main axial vista, with the Tuilleries, the gardens at Versailles, and the Arc du Triomphe forming some of the main components of this design, found many echoes in Lutyens' plan for New Delhi. The plan was also strikingly similar to the plan of Washington DC, by the French engineer Pierre L'Enfant.

The far-reaching influence of these designs was given a further boost by the launch of the Garden City Movement in Britain towards the end of the nineteenth century. By 1912, this movement had gathered substantial strength. It was not surprising, then, that the 'Garden City' concept was the main inspiration for Lutyens and Baker too. They were supported in this by the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, who had been posted in Washington during his career and now called for the plans of both Washington and Paris.

After much surveying of the Delhi area, Lutyens and Baker picked on the low rise of Raisina Hill and the area surrounding it as the location for New Delhi. With a width of about 4.5 miles (tapering to 2.5 miles near Shahjahanabad), the area was mainly cropland. In this seemingly unpromising stretch, Lutyens proposed a grand axial road, running water with fountains, rond ponts (traffic islands), parks, avenues, and buildings – grand monuments symbolizing the power of the British Empire- as well as residential bungalows. The proportion of open spaces to land developed would be 1:10 – a spaciousness that was the hallmark of a Garden City.

Some of the design elements initially proposed by Lutyens and Baker were later dropped, but the basis remained the same. It was a plan made up of radial roads in which the central buildings were grouped together, surrounded by geometrically precise stretches of greenery: tree-lined avenues; manicured lawns; and gardens that would suitably showcase the magnificence of the built structures. The main axial road was King's Way (present-day Rajpath); the grouped 'main buildings' were the Government House (Rashtrapati Bhavan), and the Secretariat buildings. Further down, to adequately balance the grandeur of Raisina Hill, were the monumental arch of India Gate, the canopy beyond, and the Princes' Park palaces. Radiating from this awe-inspiring centre were tree-lined avenues leading to other government buildings, bungalows, pre-existing monuments (like Purana Qila), and Connaught Place. New Delhi, a fine example of a Garden City, was thus born.

Tree-lined avenues in Lutyens' Delhi





## THE BUNGALOWS OF DELHI

With the capital shifting from Calcutta to Delhi, Lutyens and Baker were faced with the task of not just designing the central vista, but also providing housing for the British officials who would stay in the new city. That housing, furthermore, would have to reflect the style of the larger, grander buildings that dominated the Imperial capital. The solution Lutyens chose was the bungalow.

The word ‘bungalow’ was derived from the Hindustani ‘bangla’, indicating the geographic origin—Bengal—of the reed huts on which bungalows were first modelled. The colonial bungalow was a large, sprawling house that would best counter the hot, humid conditions of plains India. Broad verandahs, high ceilings, and tall windows allowed cross-ventilation, while the gardens and groves surrounding the bungalow provided privacy for the sahib and his family.

Delhi was already home to Europeans, several of whom had built mansions in Shahjahanabad and its suburbs. These, however, tended to follow either a classic European pattern, or, in many cases, the *haveli* pattern. *Havelis* (traditional courtyard houses) had been a part of Shahjahanabad since the establishment of the city in the mid-seventeenth century. The concept of the *haveli* was simple: the bulk of its open space was within the mansion. This implied that while the outer wall of a *haveli* kept out the rest of the world, the inside of the *haveli* contained multiple courtyards, gardens, and *dalans* (arched verandahs).

Unlike the *haveli*, the bungalow was surrounded by gardens, and was a single-storeyed structure built on a low plinth. It was usually whitewashed and was ringed on the outside by verandahs. The bungalow spread over a series of rooms and spaces with often little or no connection to the grounds outside. While the *haveli*'s gardens and open spaces lay inside the shell of the building, the exact opposite was true of the bungalow.

A typical colonial bungalow, Civil Lines



A bungalow in New Delhi

Lutyens, drawing on his experience as an architect of English country houses, modified the bungalow. He added to it classical European (especially Palladian) touches, though some indigenous elements—like *chhajjas* and occasionally, internal courtyards—were included. The resultant building style was characterized by high ceilings, clerestory windows positioned high in the walls, and shady loggias. Keeping in mind Delhi's chilly winters, Lutyens also added fireplaces in some of the main rooms, along with accompanying chimneys jutting out above the flat roof.

Lutyens' model for the bungalow—the ‘Lutyens bungalow’—was followed by other architects working on New Delhi, such as W. H. Nicholls, and R. T. Russell of the Public Works Department (PWD). Occasionally, changes were made—verandahs and loggias were reduced or done away with, for instance—but the bungalows of the new city were, on the whole, uniform. Each was surrounded by a large green compound, with a boundary wall, and servants' quarters placed at a discreet distance within the compound itself.

The bungalows of New Delhi were constructed by the PWD. Since the area they were to occupy was so huge, each bungalow sprawled in its plot of land, in some cases covering several acres. The allotment of bungalows to British officials, too, was strictly according to rank: the higher an official's standing in the hierarchy, the larger the number of bedrooms in the bungalow allotted!

Large sections of New Delhi—especially around Janpath—have since been cleared of the Lutyens-era bungalows that once graced them. Thankfully, some pockets (the area south of Rajpath is an example) still have their share of bungalows, in more or less the same condition as Lutyens had envisaged: quiet, cool islands of aloofness sitting in spacious grounds. Many, unsurprisingly, are occupied by the who's who of Indian government.

## THE PRINCELY HOUSES OR PALACES

When Lutyens and Baker began work on designing New Delhi, British India was still a mix of British-ruled territories and over 600 principalities that owed, to some extent, allegiance to the British. In February 1921, a 'Chamber of Princes' was inaugurated, the aim of its 120 members—the rulers of these principalities—to advise the Viceroy on matters that affected the princely states.

A direct consequence of this event was the need to provide space for the princes in the new city: space to house princes coming to attend the Chamber's meetings, but also space to symbolize their participation in the government. The result was Princes' Park, an area surrounding present-day India Gate, on which some of the most powerful princes were allotted land to build palaces. In all, three dozen lots (of about eight acres each) were leased out to the princes. The most powerful states—Hyderabad, Baroda, Bikaner, Patiala, and Jaipur—were given lots forming a ring around the canopy on King's Way. Lesser princes (including those of Jaisalmer, Travancore, Dholpur, and Faridkot) were given lots further out along the roads radiating from the central hexagon.

The designs of the palaces would, however, have to pass muster with the government, to ensure that the appearance remained in accordance with the rest of Lutyens' Delhi.

After India's independence, with the accession of the princely states to the Union of India, these palaces became the property of the Indian government. Most still remain part of the government, functioning as offices for government departments, or (as in the case of Jaipur House, which is today the National Gallery of Modern Art) as a centre for culture.

### 4. HYDERABAD HOUSE

Of all the palaces that comprise Princes' Park, by far the most splendid is the one Lutyens designed for Osman Ali Khan, the seventh Nizam of Hyderabad. The palace, like the neighbouring princely palaces, sits on a wedge-shaped plot of land. To use this shape to its best advantage, Lutyens designed the Palace of the Nizam of Hyderabad (as Hyderabad House was initially known) in a butterfly shape. Interestingly, the butterfly shape was a pattern Lutyens had been using for a long time—he had perfected it

as far back as 1902, for the appropriately-named Papillon House in Leicestershire. In the case of Hyderabad House, Lutyens 'halved' the butterfly, leaving it with two wings, one facing each of the two roads that flank the palace. The cream-painted, buff sandstone palace was constructed in 1926 at an estimated cost of Rs 15 million. The Nizam of Hyderabad could well afford it: he was believed to be the world's richest man. The palace is an attractive blend of European and Indian architecture: the semi-circular arches, unornamented columns, shallow urns and obelisks adorning the façade are distinctly western. On the other hand, the dome—of the same shape as that on Rashtrapati Bhavan—was inspired by the stupa at Sanchi and the carved sandstone jalis of the façade are almost exact replicas of the jalis at the Red Fort.

The palace's thirty-six rooms were designed to inspire awe: it has broad, sweeping staircases, marble fireplaces, and floors decorated with rich patterns. Even the original furnishings of the palace were imported from England.

Somewhat at odds with all this magnificence is the *zenana* (the women's quarters) that the Nizam instructed Lutyens to build as part of the palace. Compared to the spaciousness of the rest of Hyderabad House, the *zenana* consists of a dozen or so little rooms, each about the size of an 'ordinary horsebox' (as Lord Hardinge noted on a visit), surrounding a circular court.

After the death of Osman Ali Khan, his sons—who did not like the building, deeming it too western for their liking—gifted it to the Indian government in 1947. Since then, Hyderabad House has been a Government of India property, used for important government events such as press conferences, banquets, and meetings with visiting foreign dignitaries.

It is off-limits for casual visitors, but you can see the building from outside the gates.





## 5. BARODA HOUSE

Close to Hyderabad House stands Baroda House, built for Sayajirao III, the Gaekwad ruler of Baroda. Baroda House was designed by Lutyens himself; the construction began in 1921 and continued for the next fifteen years. Sayajirao had been tutored by a Britisher (F.A.H. Elliot, the Gaekwad's Political Officer and a powerful influence at court). He was, therefore, open to letting Lutyens build a palace with very few markedly Indian architectural elements.

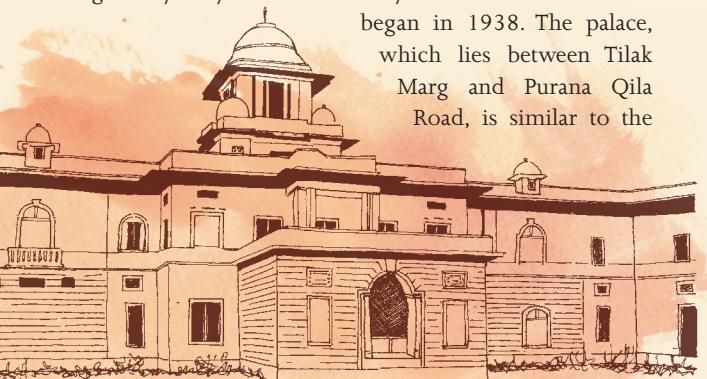
While the dome of Baroda House echoes the Sanchi Stupa, the rest of the palace is obviously Anglo-Saxon. It has large French windows with semi-circular arches; a portico; and unornamented Doric columns. Even the carved screens of the walls surrounding the terraces are more European in style than the ornate jali screens Indian stone-carvers were used to making. The building is of buff sandstone, and from above resembles a butterfly cut in two down the centre: one of its 'spread wings' faces Kasturba Gandhi Marg, the other Copernicus Marg. Baroda House today houses the headquarters of the Northern Railway – a prominent 'signboard' being the little vintage steam engine positioned outside the building, just before Copernicus Marg.

Being a government building, casual visitors are not allowed.

## 6. PATIALA HOUSE

Like Baroda House, Patiala House, built for the Maharaja of Patiala, was designed by Lutyens as a 'butterfly house'. Its construction

began in 1938. The palace, which lies between Tilak Marg and Purana Qila Road, is similar to the



other houses Lutyens built for the princes in this area: the two wings of the building are joined together with a dome above. The palace is painted cream, with sections of buff sandstone left bare to highlight balconies, parapets, and carved ventilator screens. An interesting feature is the distinctly Indian touch provided by a square, domed pavilion on the roof. With a chhajja and four smaller pavilions clustered around it. Patiala House is now an important district court of Delhi.

## 7. NATIONAL STADIUM

The National Stadium was designed by R.T. Russell of the PWD. Lutyens had been opposed to the idea of building the National Stadium on this plot of land, beside Purana Qila Road, because the stadium would hinder the view of Purana Qila from the central vista.



Lutyens, however, was overruled, and the building—initially known as the Irwin Amphitheatre, after Lord Irwin (Viceroy of India from 1926–31)—was constructed by the PWD. Completed in 1933 it was used as a multipurpose stadium, and continues to be so today. Just before Delhi hosted the 1951 Asian Games, it was renamed the National Stadium. In 2002, it was re-named the Dhyan Chand National Stadium, in honour of Major Dhyan Chand Singh (1905–1979), one of the world's finest hockey players. A bronze statue of his, installed in 2008, stands in a circular garden at the entrance to the National Stadium. The National Stadium building has a main entrance consisting of five large arches. The rest of the building is a combination of western and Indian architectural styles. Prominent among the Indian elements are the chhajjas and the chhatri that stand above the arches. The chhatri, which look fairly out of place, are believed to have been suggested by Lady Willingdon, the Vicereine when the stadium was being constructed.



## 8. JAIPUR HOUSE – NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART

Situated between Sher Shah Road and Dr Zakir Hussain Marg is one of the few princely palaces easily accessible to the general public. This is Jaipur House, designed by Arthur Bloomfield in 1936 for the Maharaja of Jaipur. Bloomfield remained true to Lutyens' vision of New Delhi: like the Lutyens-designed palaces in Princes' Park, Jaipur House too is a 'butterfly house', with a dome atop the centre. Built mainly of buff sandstone, the building has architectural elements that run the gamut from Art Deco to traditional Indian. The dome resembles the one on Rashtrapati Bhavan; a *chhajja* of red sandstone runs continuously below the roof; there are multiple strips of red sandstone inlaid to form a patterned dado and Rajput columns form arched openings along the façade.

Jaipur House is today the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), inaugurated by the Vice-President, Dr S. Radhakrishnan, in 1954. The museum's first curator was the German historian and Indologist, Hermann Goetz, who procured many of the works that form the museum's collection today.

The NGMA has a large display of art at present—primarily paintings, though there are also sculptures and some installation art—covering approximately 150 years of art in India. These range from the 'scenic views of India' painted by Thomas and William Daniell in the eighteenth century, to the 'Company art' (the 'Company' being the East India Company) that vividly recorded the lives of the 'natives', as seen from European eyes. More contemporary are the heavyweights of Indian art: Amrita Sher-Gil, Jamini Roy, Nandalal Bose, D. P. Roychowdhury, and members of the Tagore family, including Rabindranath himself.

In addition, the museum holds special exhibitions that showcase modern art, both Indian and international.

Besides the art displays, the NGMA has a library of reference material. A museum shop near the entrance sells souvenirs such as posters, greeting cards, and catalogues.

Timings: 10 am–7 pm, closed on Monday and gazetted holidays.

Entry: Indian Citizens—Rs 10, Indian students—Re 1, Foreign Nationals—Rs 150. Photography with prior permission only from the administrative office.

## 9. BIKANER HOUSE

In 1939, Lutyens designed this palace—between Shahjahan Road and Pandara Road—for Ganga Singh, the Maharaja of Bikaner. Ganga Singh was an enlightened and progressive ruler, who carried out land and prison reforms, constructed the Ganga Canal, and did a lot for the welfare of his subjects. He was, in addition, a believer in self-rule for India. It is possible, therefore, that he did not see the need for a grand show of opulence in the Imperial capital at Delhi. As it was, the palace Lutyens designed for him is the most understated and least striking of the buildings of Princes' Park.

The palace has large verandahs along the front, a backyard, and extensive gardens—all of which were typical features of the bungalows Lutyens designed in New Delhi.

Bikaner House is now the office of Rajasthan Tourism. Luxury and deluxe tourist buses between Delhi and different destinations in Rajasthan use it as a base for departures and arrivals. Buses bound for Jaipur, for example, leave Bikaner House every half hour.



## 10. PARLIAMENT HOUSE

The original plans for the central vista of New Delhi had not included a separate building for a parliament, since the body of representatives that acted as a council was then small enough to have its meetings in modest halls. However, with the Morley-Minto reforms of 1919, Indian representation in the Viceroy's council suddenly rose. With it arose the need to construct a building large enough to accommodate the hundreds of members who would meet under one roof. What resulted was the Council House, today known as Sansad Bhavan or Parliament House.

Parliament House stands north-west of Vijay Chowk (at the foot of Raisina Hill) and was designed by Herbert Baker. The Duke of Connaught, on his visit to Delhi in 1921, laid the foundation stone for the building; it took six years to build and was inaugurated by the then Viceroy, Lord Irwin, in January 1927.

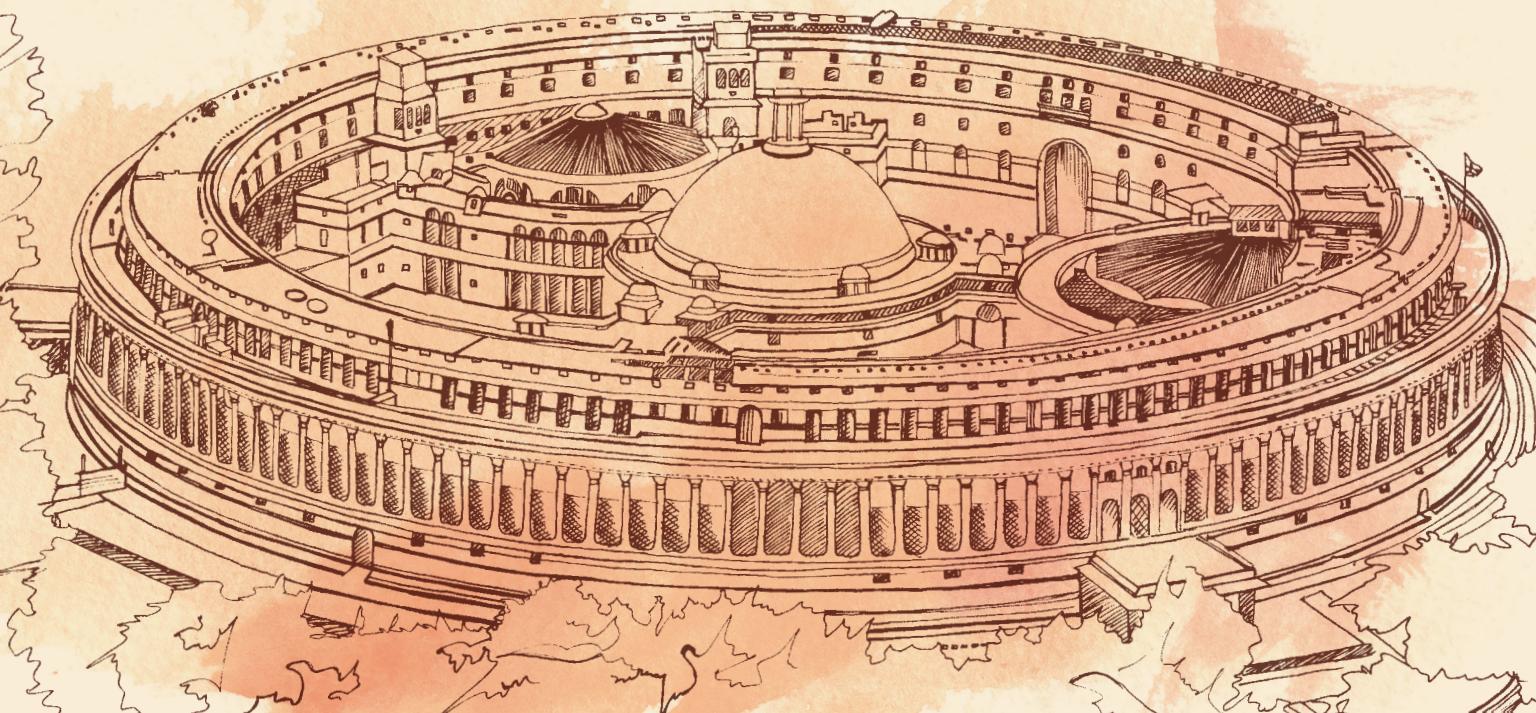
The original plan for the Council House had been in the form of an equilateral triangle. Lutyens, however, was of the opinion that this shape would clash with the hexagon-based design of New Delhi. What he suggested, instead, was that the Council House be made in a style resembling Rome's Coliseum. The design finally implemented was a circular building, ringed on the outside by a colonnaded verandah. The edifice, mainly of buff sandstone, sits on a red sandstone platform and sprawls over six acres. It is

560 ft in diameter. (The niches built into this platform bear plaques with inscriptions honouring the more prominent people involved in the building of New Delhi).

Parliament House consists of a central hall topped by a dome and three semi-circular chambers that are surrounded by garden courts. The three semi-circular chambers housed the Chamber of Princes, the Council of State, and the Legislative Assembly. In present-day India, the Rajya Sabha (the Upper House) holds its sessions in one chamber, while the Lok Sabha (the House of the People) uses the other chamber. The third chamber has been converted into the Parliament Library. The central hall is now used as a venue for major international functions and for joint sessions involving both houses of Parliament.

Interestingly, for about a decade after Independence, the Supreme Court was housed in the Chamber of Princes. This chamber, unlike the much simpler Council of State chamber, has carved screens to allow women members in purdah to attend sessions.

As in the case of the Secretariat, at Parliament House too Baker used a combination of western and Indian architectural forms. The dome, the semi-circular arched windows, and the towering columns of the verandahs surrounding the three chambers on two floors, are European. On the other hand, the geometric patterns that comprise the jalis of the boundary wall and the parapets echo



Indo-Islamic architecture. The capitals of the pillars supporting the portico roof are also very Indian.

In 1989, an additional building was added next to Parliament House, to act as an extension of the Parliament Library. This is the New Parliament Library building, or the Sansadiya Gyanpeeth. In contrast to the colonial style of the older building, the Sansadiya Gyanpeeth (designed by Raj Rewal) is contemporary in style, with low domes, glass, steel, and stone used to create the scattered buildings that comprise the library.

The Sansadiya Gyanpeeth is also home to the Parliamentary Museum and Archives (PMA). The brainchild of Somnath Chatterjee, Speaker of the Lok Sabha between 2004 and 2009, the PMA was opened to the public in September 2006. It consists of the Parliamentary Museum, the Parliamentary Photographs and Films Section, and the Parliamentary Archives.

The museum, in particular, is a storehouse of memorabilia that showcases India's history, right from the Vedic period till the present day. Interactive multimedia exhibits, dioramas, and artefacts—for instance, robes worn by high-ranking British Raj officials, or furniture from the Chamber of Princes—are among the highlights of the museum. An especially interesting exhibit is a scale model of Parliament House.

Of the other two sections of the Sansadiya Gyanpeeth, the Parliamentary Photographs and Films Section houses original visual and audio-visual records of the Parliament, its history, activities, and members. The third section of the Sansadiya Gyanpeeth, the Archives, acts as an archival system for documents linked with framing and development of the Indian Constitution. The Archives also stores records of the development and functioning of parliamentary institutions, and, the private papers of eminent parliamentarians. Casual visitors are not allowed into Parliament House. A letter of introduction from a Member of Parliament can be used to get an entry pass for the library. The library is open on all weekdays from 10 pm–6 pm.

The Parliamentary Museum in the Sansadiya Gyanpeeth is open for visitors from 11 am–5 pm, Sunday & Monday closed.

Entry: Rs 10 for adults, free for students.

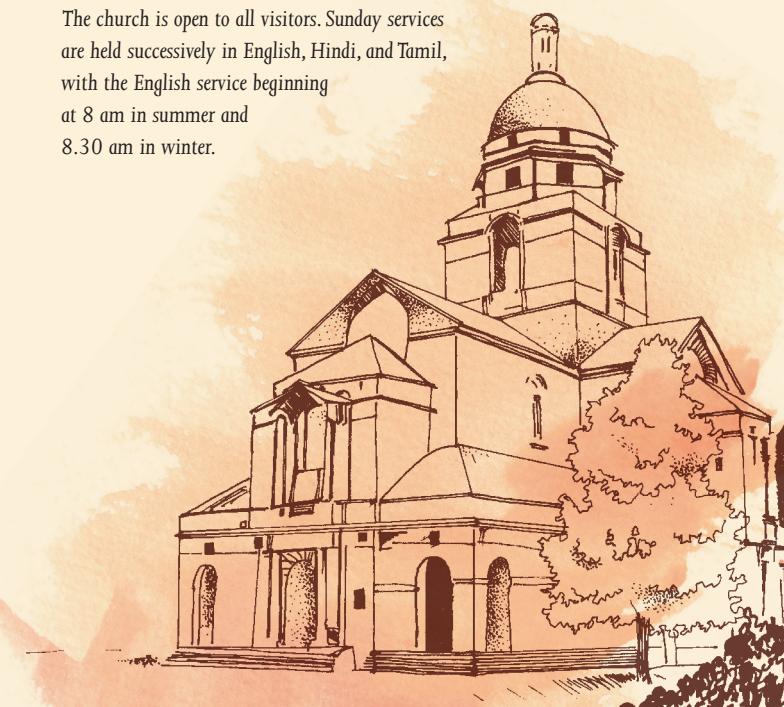
## 11. THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF REDEMPTION

In the early 1900s, a number of British officers and bureaucrats who were living in the area that now comprises the heart of New Delhi had no designated place of worship for Anglican services. The circular building known as Alexandra Place (now the Gole Dak-khana), used as a venue for Sunday services, could accommodate only sixty people at a time.

Revd. T.R. Dixon, the chaplain at Delhi, put forward a request for a more permanent (and larger) church. Lutyens proposed a site just north of the Jaipur Column. Architects were invited to present designs and the one proposed by Henry Alexander Nesbitt Medd (who also designed the Sacred Heart Cathedral) was approved in 1925. A budget of Rs 50,000 was set aside for the church building, which was completed in 1930. The Church of Redemption was consecrated and opened its doors on Sunday, 18 January, 1931. In April 1947, the church was elevated to the rank of a cathedral, the seat of the new Diocese of Delhi, part of the Church of North India (CNI).

The cathedral, modelled on Venice's Palladio Church and London's Hampstead Church, is made completely of buff sandstone. It has a striking external appearance, with a large dome resting atop an octagonal drum, with sloping roofs spreading out to form a typical cruciform church. Inside, too, the church is largely buff sandstone, with ornate Corinthian columns forming the bulk of the decoration. The high altar is of polished dark wood; just before the altar, facing the pews, is a stone plaque dedicated to Henry Alexander Nesbitt Medd. Among the other interesting historic objects in the church are a fine old organ and a silver cross donated by Lord Irwin. The stained glass window in the tiny chapel on the right of the high altar is a recent addition.

The church is open to all visitors. Sunday services are held successively in English, Hindi, and Tamil, with the English service beginning at 8 am in summer and 8.30 am in winter.



## Other Places of Interest

### a. IGNCA

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts was set up in 1987 as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture. It has since devoted itself to the preservation and propagation of the arts. The IGNCA's main goal is to act as a centre for research, restoration, and dissemination of art and culture. Included here are the library (Kala Nidhi), designed by the American architect Ralph Lerner in 1985; a centre for lifestyle studies (Janapada Sampada); a centre for the study and publication of Indian-language texts (Kala Kosa); and the Cultural Informatics Lab, which restores and preserves archive material, the administrative wing, Sutradhar, and an exhibition hall (Kaladarsana). The IGNCA is an interesting place to visit for the wide range of exhibitions, seminars, conferences, performances and screenings that it hosts.

Timings: Library open from 10.00 am–6.00 pm. Entry: Free



### b. NATIONAL MUSEUM

In 1947–48, an exhibition of Indian art and antiquities, drawn from various museums across India, was held at the Burlington House galleries in London. The success of the exhibition prompted the question: why not replicate the idea in India? When the exhibits were brought back to India, they were again displayed, at Rashtrapati Bhavan, the exhibition again proving successful. Finally, the government decided to formally launch a National Museum for India. The official inauguration of the museum was held on 15 August, 1949, under

the aegis of the then Governor-General of India, C. Rajagopalachari.

The site chosen for the building was at the junction of Janpath and Maulana Azad Road. The National Museum contains over 2,00,000 exhibits, ranging across a period of 5,000 years. The bulk of these are of Indian origin, though there are also exhibits from other parts of the world.

The buff sandstone building is arranged in the form of a series of galleries, spreading out on three sides of a central, circular well-like space. Three floors of galleries hold an extensive collection of exhibits: for instance, the ground floor has a range of ancient Indian sculpture, manuscripts, jewellery, and medieval art. Tribal art, Ajanta paintings, and Central Asian artefacts are (among other sections) on the first floor. The second floor is home to displays of pre-Columbian and western art, along with weaponry, musical

instruments, coins, etc. The museum also holds special temporary exhibitions, often with priceless exhibits being brought in from international museums.

Timings: 10 am–5 pm, film shows on art heritage of India 2.30 pm (weekdays), 11.30 am, 2.30 pm & 4.30 pm (weekends)

Entry: Indian Citizens—Rs 10, free for students, Foreign Nationals—Rs 300

A small fee is payable for cameras. Photography is allowed except in galleries where it is specifically prohibited.

### c. RAKAB GANJ SAHIB GURUDWARA

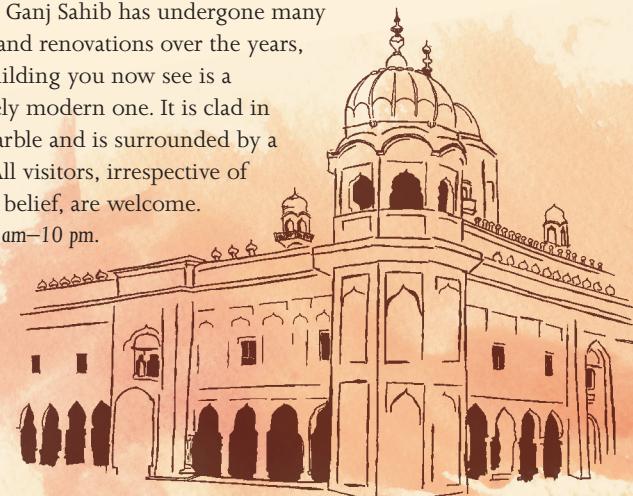
Located at the intersection of Pandit Pant Marg and Church Road, facing the Parliament House Library, is the large, triple-domed Rakab Ganj Sahib Gurudwara. The original gurudwara on this site was built by Sardar Baghel Singh (AD 1730–1802), a prominent Sikh general who carried out several raids on Delhi during the eighteenth century. He is believed to have attempted an invasion of Delhi in AD 1783, with an army of 30,000 Sikh warriors and upon his arrival, laid claim to the site where the ninth Sikh guru, Guru Teg Bahadur, had been cremated. The site had been the home of one of Teg Bahadur's disciples, Lakhi Shah Vanjara, who is said to have burnt down his house—with the guru's dead body inside—in place of giving the body a regular cremation.

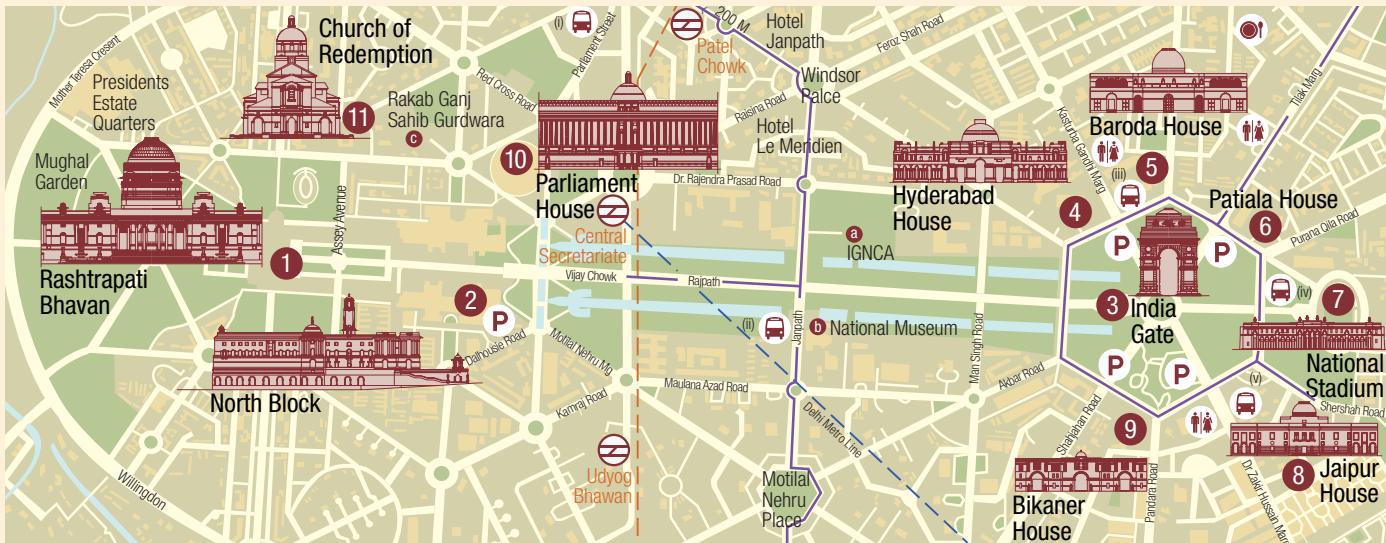
Sardar Baghel Singh's attempt to claim the site of the guru's cremation for the Sikhs met with opposition from the Muslims of Delhi, since the site was already home to a mosque. After much deliberation, however, the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II (r. AD 1759–1806) granted the land to the Sikhs. Sardar Baghel was allowed to construct the gurudwara and lay a garden around it. In addition, the Sikhs were given about 63 acres of land, three wells, all to be exempted from taxation.

Rakab Ganj Sahib has undergone many changes and renovations over the years, so the building you now see is a completely modern one. It is clad in white marble and is surrounded by a garden. All visitors, irrespective of religious belief, are welcome.

Timings: 7 am–10 pm.

Entry: Free

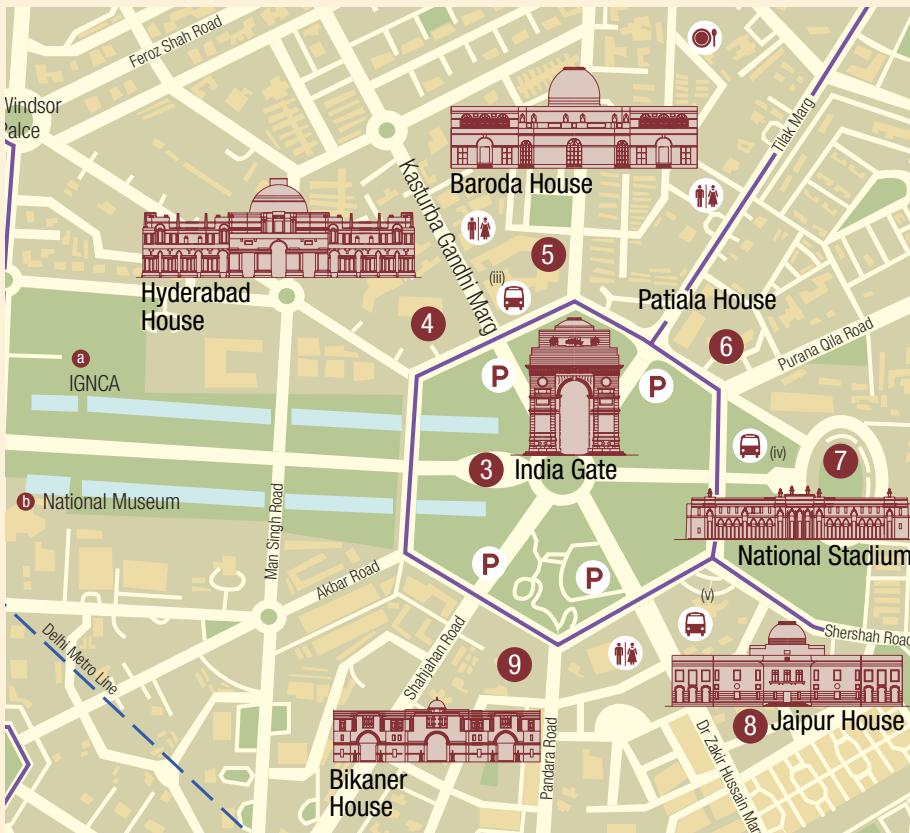




### Nearest Bus Stops

- (i) **Akashvani Bhawan:** 47, 139, 156, 168, 181, 70, 610, 604, 630, 139, 616, 410, 342, 156, 620, 360, 168, 632, 445, 390, 641, 450, 391, 070, 770, 459, 400, 190, 780
- (ii) **National Museum:** 55, 62, 51, 408, 456, 490, 522, 580, 970, 994, 615, 526, 505, 470, 410, 156, 47, 181, 430, 481, 521, 531, 930
- (iii) **Baroda House:** 26, 430, 513, 40, 435, 501, 503, 502, 522, 531, 533, 550, 621, 623, 893, 484, 48, 53, 173, 326, 355, 344, 345, 375, 405, 410, 435, 493, 452, 456, 759, 466, 781, 490, 43, 45, 51, 56, 156, 440, 450, 893, 894
- (iv) **Patiala House:** 26, 53, 305, 335, 345, 375, 513, 561, 621, 173, 326, 336, 373, 503, 533, 605, 622, 052
- (v) **Jaipur House:** 40, 156, 410, 490, 452, 893, 894, 930, 470

- Bus Stand
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