

Vaastu & Town Planning,

The Vaastu way

In celebration of India's 62nd year of independence "The Vaastu Way" series presents an essay on how the British built India's capital city, New Delhi.

Planned by Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker both leading 20th century British architects and subsequently contracted to Sir Sobha Singh, New Delhi is known for its wide, tree-lined boulevards and houses numerous national institutions and landmarks.

New Delhi is the second-largest city in India and the eighth largest in the world by population. Located on the banks of the River Yamuna, it is the site of many ancient and medieval monuments, archaeological sites and remains.

The earliest reference to a settlement at Delhi is found in the epic Mahabharata which mentions a city called Indraprastha, built for the Pandavas, about 1400 BC under the direction of Vishvakarma, the celestial architect on a huge mound somewhere between the sites where the historic Old Fort (Purana Qilah) and Humayun's Tomb were

later to be located. However, nothing remains of Indraprastha today, though according to legend, once upon a time it was a thriving city.

Delhi has not always been the capital of India but has played an important role in Indian history. In 1639, Mughal emperor Shahjahan built a new walled city in Delhi which served as the capital of the Mughal Empire from 1649 to 1857.

After the British East India Company gained control of much of India during the 18th and 19th centuries, Calcutta became the capital both under Company rule and under the British Raj, until King George V announced in 1911 that the capital was to move back to Delhi.

It was selected to stand adjacent to Old Delhi, the erstwhile capital of the Mughal empire, to emphasize continuity between the two imperial traditions.

Architectural developments of New Delhi under British rule were perhaps the most outstanding, with splendid edifices coming up as planned, every other day. If one leaves aside the cruelty of the ruthless rule of these instances of Architectural masterpieces elevate the English to a respectable level.



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When the decision was made in 1911 to transfer the capital of India from Kolkata to Delhi, and a town planning committee was formed, a site was chosen three miles south of the existing city of Delhi, around Raisina Hill. This was a well-drained, healthy area between the ridge and the river that provided ample room for expansion. The Raisina Hill, commanding a view of the entire area, stood 50 feet (15 metres) above the plain, but the top 20 feet were blasted off to make a level

Sansad Bhavan (Parliament House)



The Sansad Bhavan is the brainchild of Sir Herbert Baker and is much criticized in comparison with Lutyens creations and is often referred to as "Sir Herbert's unhappiest venture." The Sansad Bhavan comprises three semicircular chambers for the Legislatures and a Central Library crowned by a 27.4m high dome. It is 173m in diameter and covers 2.02 hectares in area, with colonnaded verandahs enclosing the entire circumference. The three semi-circular areas were designed for the Chamber of Princes, the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly. Today they house the chambers of the Lok Sabha (House of the People), Rajya Sabha (Upper House) and the library.

Semi circular sitting



Vaastu Angle

The Vaastu-deficient circular building of India's Parliament is located in Vaastu-defect triangular plot with three roads on each side. The circular shape of the Parliament House, the green carpeted floor and the semi-circular shape of the Lok Sabha are not conducive for healthy thought-provoking debates and should be made a rectangular structure. Since M.P.s do not sit in one direction and face the Chair from varying angles because of semi-circular shape of Lok Sabha, it is difficult for the Chair to bring order in the proceedings of the House.

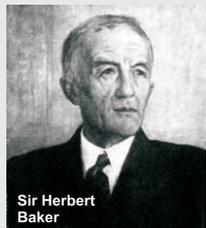
The seating inside the Parliament House be rearranged into a square or rectangular form so as to meet Vaastu dictates. This would help bring a bit of calmness to the workings of our lawmakers. Our Parliament House is the only building with such a shape in the entire world, all other governing body's building in the Europe and America are rectangular in shape. Even when this House was built by Britishers in 1927, they could not sustain their hold in the country for long and were forced to leave.

New Delhi : The Capital Of India



Sir Edwin Lutyen

Born March 29, 1869, London, Sir Edwin Lutyen, British architect was commissioned to design India's new capital in 1911. His brief was unambiguous, the new capital should match, if not improve upon, the grandeur and vastness of the world's best cities, yet capitalize on the intricacy of the Indian architecture. With a free hand to draw as he pleased, Lutyen sketched out the flowing lines of New Delhi - the Rashtrapati, the Parliament and the magnificent drive or Raj Path from the President's house to the India Gate.



Sir Herbert Baker

In 1912 Baker came to India to work with Sir Edwin Lutyens on the Secretariat building and Parliament House in New Delhi as well as the bungalows of Members of Parliament.



Rashtrapati Bhavan

Rashtrapati Bhavan is the official residence of the President of India. Until 1950 it was known as "Viceroy's House" and served as the residence of the Governor-General of India. Lutyens travelled between India and England almost every year for twenty years, to work on the building of the Viceroy's house in both countries. Lutyens had to reduce the building size from 13 to 8.5 million cubic feet (240,000 m³) because of the budget restrictions of Lord Hardinge. It has 355 decorated rooms and a floor area of 200,000 square feet (19,000 m²). The structures includes 700 million bricks and 3.5 million cubic feet (85,000 m³) of stone, with only minimal usage of steel.

The President of India does not occupy the suites, now called Ashoka room, occupied by the Viceroys. Instead they occupy one of the guest bedrooms. The second (and last) Governor General of the Dominion of India (and the only Indian to hold the office), C Rajagopalachari, considered the master bedroom too ostentatious for his humble tastes. All Presidents thereafter have followed the tradition. Rashtrapati Bhavan is the biggest residence of any Head of the State in the world, reportedly larger, even than the American White House.

20 feet were blasted off to make a level plateau for the major government buildings and to fill in depressions.

The Oriental Delhi of the Mughals was given a whole fresh Western look, when the British took up the task of developing the city architecturally. Within a period spanning from 1912-1935, New Delhi was rebuilt and reconstructed by Britons, as one witnessed the erection of churches, official buildings and war memorials. In times of terrible blood and violence, New Delhi stood apart in its architectures.

The city layout : The city plan of Delhi is a mixture of contrasting old and new road and circulation patterns. The contrast between the convoluted form of the old city and the diagonal features of the modern traffic arteries

in New Delhi is particularly striking.

The street pattern of Old Delhi reflects some of the older requirements of defense, with a few transverse streets leading from one major gate to another. Occasionally a through street from a subsidiary gate leads to the main axes. The other Old Delhi streets tend to be irregular in direction, length, and width and are suitable only for pedestrian traffic. Thus, the pattern as a whole consists of a confusing mixture of narrow and winding streets, culs-de-sac, and byways giving access to residences and commercial areas.

In sharp contrast to Old Delhi, the Civil Lines (residential areas originally built by the British for senior officers) in the north present an aspect of relative openness, characterized by green grass and trees, order, and quiet.

Conclusion

The small town of Indraprastha, built about 1400 BC under the direction of Vishvakarma has now grown into The National Capital Region (NCR) metropolitan area which encompasses the entire National Capital Territory of Delhi as well as urban areas ringing it in neighbouring states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. With a total area of about 33,578 km² it is one of world's largest urban agglomeration.

New Delhi is the nerve centre of India's democracy. For all its flaws, democracy in India has worked and no matter how powerful the rulers who stay there may feel, they know that if they don't perform, they can and will be thrown out by the people. In that sense, New Delhi is India's most steadfast guarantee of its freedom. ■

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