The Millennium Book on NEW DELHI

edited by
B.P. SINGH
PAVAN K. VARMA
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>B.P. Singh</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Historical Sketch</td>
<td>Khushwant Singh</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Epochal Transition from a Colonial to a Republican Capital</td>
<td>Ravinder Kumar</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Creation of a Planned City</td>
<td>Sunita Kohli</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Flora and Fauna of Delhi</td>
<td>Ranjit Lal</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Happening City</td>
<td>Madhu Jain</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi’s Living Heritage</td>
<td>Premlata Puri</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Travails of a Metropolis</td>
<td>Mark Tully</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Economic and Institutional Profile of a City-State</td>
<td>Bibek Debroy</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>Pavan K. Varma</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronology</td>
<td>H.K. Kaul</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographical Notes</td>
<td></td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select Bibliography</td>
<td></td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Credits</td>
<td></td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td></td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Creation of a Planned City

Sunita Kohli

In December 1911, the Coronation Durbar was held at Delhi. King George V announced, by imperial proclamation, the creation of a new capital at Delhi. Under the viceroy, the supreme government of India had, until then, been at Calcutta for the four winter months. Simla was the seat of government for the rest of the year. Delhi was chosen because it was considered centrally located, with a healthy climate and ease of access. Geographically, it was equidistant from Karachi, Bombay,
The Final Report of the Delhi Town Planning Committee on the Town Planning of the New Imperial Capital

1. Preliminary.

The Committee now propose to present the separate reports on the plans for the new Imperial capital at Delhi.

In accordance with the programme detailed in the concluding paragraphs of their report on the choice of a site for the new Imperial capital at Delhi, the Committee recommends the adoption of the site already selected for the new city. The site is a level plain of about 360 acres, with a water table of about 15 feet below the surface. It is bounded on the east by the river Yamuna and on the west by a line of hills.

The whole railway system in the vicinity of the site was surveyed and plans for the construction of the new city were prepared. The plans provide for a population of about 15,000 inhabitants, which can be increased to a maximum of 20,000 by the construction of additional buildings.

The acquisition of land for the site began in September 1910. The site was taken over by the Government of India in December 1911, and the work of construction was commenced in January 1912.

The Committee conclude by expressing their hope that the new capital will be a fitting tribute to the memory of the great men who have worked for its foundation, and that it will be a fitting symbol of the progress and prosperity of India.
for the new city. It was assumed that the new capital would be built along Civil Lines, till then serving as the transit capital. Historian Narayani Gupta points out: 'The important thing was that the new site must be Delhi, that is, an area in close physical and general association with the present city of Delhi and the Delhiis of the past.' In its report of 13 June 1912, the committee concluded that except at vast expense, a healthy capital laid out on a large scale and occupied for seven months was impossible on the northern site. It also meant uprooting the entire European population settled in Civil Lines, most of whom were businessmen. The members concluded that the northern area 'was too cramped for a worthy city' and not sufficient land was available for expansion.

The TPC stressed that the new city be situated south of Shahjahanabad. Only there, or across the river, it was possible to secure ten square miles for the city and fifteen square miles for the new cantonment at Naraina. The site around the village of Raisina was suitable for reasons of health, for its proximity to the river, for its undulating land, and for its many sites of archaeological interest. The cost of land was low, there was good natural drainage, and railway communications could be easily effected. Despite Hardinge's initial panic at such extravagant plans, this site was eventually finalized.

As proposed by Lutyens, in the initial layout for the city, the Government House site just north of Malcha served as a crucial anchor of the central axis of the plan. On 20 March 1913, the final report from the TPC was handed over to Hardinge. Twenty years later, speaking of Lord Hardinge's founding role, Lutyens declared, 'His command that one avenue should lead to Purana Qila and another to the Jama Masjid was the father of the equilateral and hexagonal plan.'

According to this plan, one principal axis ran from the dome of the Viceroy's House on Raisina Hill to Jama Masjid in Shahjahanabad. At an angle of sixty degrees to this stretched east the principal ceremonial axis of New Delhi, Kingsway, which ended at Purana Qila in the east.

A broad crescent from Shahjahanabad and Firuz Shah Kotla was to run south up to Tughlaqabad and the Qutub. Lutyens later reduced it up to Safdarjung's Tomb with the tombs of Safdarjung and the Lodis, and the Jantar Mantar observatory in the foreground.

The city, in its final form, was roughly hexagonal in shape and focused on three climactic points. The focal point was the Raisina acropolis, with the two large secretariats and the Viceroy's House, whose spacious forecourt led into the principal pathway, Central Vista, that continued as the processional route called King's Way, now known as Rajpath. A north-south avenue, Queen's Way, now known as Janpath, cut King's Way at right angles and terminated at the new railway station to the north in Connaught Place and at the Anglican Cathedral to the south at the present Motilal Nehru Place.

Inspecting the ground on which New Delhi came up. From left, Herbert Baker, Edwin Lutyens, George Swinton and the mahout.

First sketch of the new city by Lutyens in 1913. Once the site was selected, the plans were put in place. There was a debate on the style to be followed. Finally the Indo-Saracenic style prevailed. The garden city was planned as an imperial capital with places, processional avenues, and imposing facades.
At the junction of the two avenues, four large buildings were to form a cultural and intellectual plaza: the Oriental Institute, National Museum, National Library, and Imperial Records Office. Of these, only the last, now known as the National Archives, was completed, while the museum was built after independence. Later it was decided that the All India War Memorial Arch, renamed India Gate, together with a memorial for King George V, would complete the ceremonial route, Kingsway. This was to be two miles long and twice as wide as the Champs Élysées in Paris. All around there was to be a garden city. Lutyens was clearly influenced by the vistas in Rome and boulevards in Paris and Versailles as also the L'Enfant's plan for Washington DC and its Mall. Between the secretariats, India Gate, and Connaught Place, virtually all roads met at angles of thirty or sixty degrees. These were to be beautifully lined, principally with indigenous trees and were to be named after about seventy British sovereigns and nine previous rulers of Delhi.

Apart from the plan of this new capital,
there was also the 'question of style'. A definitive 'Imperial Style' had never been achieved, although the search for one had preoccupied the British throughout their stay in India. In the early years, building activity was fundamentally commercial and was largely undertaken by amateur architects or military engineers who used available patterns from books for prototypes, such as is seen in the earliest British buildings in Madras and Calcutta. After 1857, the
dominant style of colonial architecture in India was Indo-Saracenic. During these years of reconstruction, the British first began to formulate an ideology that self-consciously represented Britain as an imperial state and themselves as legitimate and almost indigenous rulers. This ideology of empire was manifested most strongly in their architecture.

The question of style resulted in a fierce debate based on aesthetic, political, and social considerations. On the one hand were the partisans of Indo-Saracenic design, who proposed the use of the pre-existing architectural traditions of Akbar’s Fatehpur Sikri and Shahjahan’s Shahjahanabad, and on the other were those who promulgated assertive imperialism, insisting that European classicism alone could represent the empire in stone. In the end, both these extreme views were rejected.

The king himself was strongly in favour of a Mughal style of architecture. ‘Fancy Shakespeare being asked by Elizabeth to write an ode in Chaucerian metre’, was Lutyens private comment. Lutyens was also informed that the viceroy, ‘for high considerations of state, felt bound to have an Indian styled city’. Lutyens eventually came to the conclusion that what was needed was a synthesis of eastern and western styles. This was something very different from grafting eastern excrescences on to a western building which he felt was being strongly advocated.

He wrote,

... to express modern India in stone, to represent her amazing sense of the supernatural, with its complement of profound fatalism and enduring patience,
is no easy task... this cannot be done by the almost sterile stability of the English classical style; nor can it be done by capturing Indian details and inserting their features, like hanging pictures on a wall.

Lutyens was confirmed as the architect for New Delhi in February 1913. By November 1913, Hardinge had come around to Lutyens' idea of a fusion of eastern and western styles. For Lutyens, the round arch was an integral part of his design rather than the pointed arch proposed by the viceroy.

With the resolution of 'style', the principal buildings of the new capital began to be built. Foremost among these was the Viceroy's House, now Rashtrapati Bhavan. Around this, the whole city was envisaged. Larger than Versailles, it was conceived of as a three-dimensional classical Renaissance composition with many finely and intrinsically integrated vernacular idioms of Indian architecture.

In Rashtrapati Bhavan, the principal fronts are 640 feet wide, and the north and south fronts are 540 feet wide. The circumference at the base is over half a mile. It has four floors with some 340 rooms and loggias of varying sizes. The floor area covers 200,000 square feet. Some 700 million bricks and three million cubic feet of stone went into the structure, with comparatively little steel and cement. At the peak of its construction, 29,000 labourers worked on the project. It was conceived of, in Lutyens' words, as 'one complete organism, perfect and inseparable'. There are no afterthoughts in the form of annexes and appendages that are to be found in many other palaces and mansions.

In this house Lutyens worked with many quintessential elements of indigenous architecture. Realizing the crucial importance of light and shade, he introduced the loggias. These run right round the external faces of Rashtrapati Bhavan and mask the actual window and door openings. They also provide a superb common repetitive theme. From Rajput and Mughal architecture, Lutyens adopted chhajjas, chhatris, and jalis. Lutyens also acknowledged the vital role of colour and texture. He therefore used the same red sandstone that the Mughals had used at Fatehpur Sikri. He interspersed this with cream stone from Dholpur, Bharatpur, and Agra in brilliant horizontal bands of colour. This accentuated the vast horizontal emphasis of the building as a whole.

The dominant feature of the building is the central dome. Here, a copper hemisphere rises from a white stone drum incised with railings, directly influenced by the great stupa at Sanchi. It was Hardinge who suggested that 'a flat golden dome' be incorporated because it went 'admirably' with the Renaissance style.
in the Jaipur Column and the fountains in the Mughal Gardens.

Lutyens also incorporated the temple bell as it is an integral part of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions. To the five classical orders of western architecture, he distinguished himself by adding the sixth, 'the Delhi Order'. These are handsome columns with remarkably original capitals consisting of four temple bells.

Inside the vast establishment of the palace, the Mughal Gardens were the element that Lutyens clearly acknowledged as a direct heritage from the Mughals. Yet, according to Professor M. Shafee (Delhi School of Planning and Architecture), they are not strictly 'Mughal' but inspired and innovated. These occupy 250 acres.

Lutyens also designed a complex of staff quarters on the viceregal estate itself. They, and the Bodyguard Lines, reflect, in miniature, the complex interlocking geometrical relationships of the city as a whole. The actual work of construction of the Viceroy's House was parcelled out among many Indian contractors, supervised by a few British engineers.

As part of the collaborative agreement between Lutyens and Baker, the secretariat buildings were designed by Herbert Baker. These two buildings are built on three levels and have about a thousand rooms connected by twelve miles of corridors. Presently serving as the offices of the central government, the prime minister's offices

The Durbar Hall in Rashtrapati Bhavan is approached through thirteen-feet-high entrance doors. Palladian influence is clearly evident in the four huge apses inset into the walls. Indian marble of many colours adorn its walls. Apart from red and cream sandstone on the external facade, Lutyens used many other varieties of stone such as white from Makrana, grey from Kotah, green from Baroda, pink from Alwar, and black from Bhaishana.

Lutyens incorporated many Indian motifs in Rashtrapati Bhavan. He used the cobra for the fountains of South Court and engraved elephants on gates, on the pillars, and in the entrances to the basement. The lotus motif was also used
are located at one end of South Block, while the defence ministry is at the other end with external affairs in the middle. North Block houses the ministry of home affairs and finance ministries.

The famous 'Battle of the Gradient' between Lutyens and Baker began amicably and concerned the positioning of the Viceroy's House in relation to the two secretariat buildings. While the initial plan envisaged the Viceroy's House as the sole occupant on top of Raisina Hill, Baker suggested placing the two secretariat buildings on the same elevated platform. It was deemed necessary to convey a clear signal that the administrative and executive powers were united in their common

A portion of the Durbar Hall showing the chandelier suspended 33 metres from the roof. The hall is the main chamber of the building. Sunlight comes in from an oculus and through numerous jaalis on the upper portions of the wall. The floor is of marble and the roof undecorated, giving the room an impression of great space.

The gate to Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Jaipur Column bathed in moonlight.
purpose, that is the governance of India. Lutyens readily agreed to the suggestion only to realize a few years later the full implications of the change of plan. It actually meant that the inclined way leading up to the palace, a gradient of $22^\circ\frac{1}{2}$, masked the entire frontage and part of the dome of the Viceroy’s House. Approaching the Viceroy’s House one begins to lose sight of the portico half a mile from the brow of Raisina Hill, while at Great Place (now Vijay Chowk) one sees only the palace dome above the rise. Finally even this disappears completely until one reaches the crest of the inclined way leading to Government Court and its flanking secretariat blocks. It was actually to remain an ironical symbol of the ever-elusive empire.

Despite several later attempts on Lutyens’ part to get things corrected, it was never to be. Lutyens and Baker fell out for life after this, and henceforth Lutyens was to refer to this episode as his ‘Bakerloo’.

Baker was also responsible for Parliament House, although its colosseum design was proposed by Lutyens. The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 created a large legislative assembly, necessitating the construction of the building bearing that name. As it was an afterthought, it ruined Lutyens’ much-sought-after symmetry.

Parliament House is a huge circular building in red and buff sandstone with open colonnaded verandas encircling the entire circumference. Inside, it comprises a circular central hall, crowned by a ninety feet-high dome. Around this hall, there are three semi-circular halls, two for the legislatures and one as the Princes’ Chamber, which is now a library. Incidentally, the cityplan pattern was spoiled by ‘Raksha Bhavan’, designed by the chief architect J. M. Benjamin (Central Public Works Department) as a square-shaped building in a symmetrical plot.

When the staff bungalows were to be commissioned, Lutyens’ plans were considered too expensive by the Delhi Committee, whereas Baker’s ‘bungle-ohs’, as Lutyens called them, were approved. The latter went on to design the houses of the princes along King’s Way, designing Hyderabad House, Baroda House, and also the National Archives.

Other princely houses include Faridkot House, now housing the Central Administrative Tribunal and Press Council.
The Creation of a Planned City
of India; Patiala House, now housing lawcourts; Bikaner House, now the official residence of the commissioner of Rajasthan and the Rajasthan Tourism office; and Jaipur House, built around 1936 and presently the National Gallery of Modern Art. All these more or less flank the central axial road of Rajpath.

Most of these buildings were designed by European architects who were attracted to work in this new emerging imperial city. They were all clearly influenced by the style that Lutyens had conceived of for the buildings of New Delhi. Some private bungalows were also built. Notable among them, for its excellence of design and grace of proportions, is 10 Aurangzeb Road. It was formerly the residence of Mohammad Ali Jinnah till it was sold to the Netherlands government in 1953. At present, it is the residence of the Dutch ambassador.

Lutyens was also given the responsibility
of designing the 'All India War Memorial Arch', now known as India Gate, and the King George V Memorial. The arch commemorates the 60,000 Indian soldiers killed in the First World War and the over 13,000 British and Indian officers and men killed on the north-west frontier. It is a colossal structure, almost 140 feet high, with sculpted panels of stonework relief and a dentilled cornice dividing the huge central arch from the massive masonry of the attic above. This is inscribed with the single word, 'INDIA'. Crowning the attic is a shallow dome from which rises a column of sacred smoke. The arch and the memorial were intended to be emotive unifying symbols. In 1972, a small eternal flame, 'Amar Jawan Jyoti', was added by the then-prime minister Indira Gandhi as another memorial to the Unknown Soldier, to commemorate 25 years of Indian independence.

As an integral part of the new capital, numerous churches were also planned. The Cathedral Church of Redemption was
Battle of the gradient. The two architects, Baker and Lutyens, fell out over the plan of the three buildings on Raisina Hill. Baker proposed that the two secretariat buildings be on the same plane as the Viceroy's House. Lutyens put his assent on paper, only to later realize its implications. The Viceroy's House would not be visible from the Great Place (now Vijay Chowk). That is how it stands today.

The dome of the North Block (the Ministry of Home Affairs has its office here). Note the ship on the pillar in the foreground.
designed by Henry Medd. It is conceived of in a baroque manner with the dome over the central tower and a cool shaded interior perfectly adapted to Delhi's unrelenting climate. Medd's other great work is the Roman Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart near North Block. Completed in 1934, its interior is based on Lutyens' famous Thiepval Arch.

Three miles from Raisina Hill lies the Garrison Church of St Martin designed by Arthur Shoosmith. St Thomas Church was built between 1930 and 1931. It was designed by Walter George and was built for Indian sweepers. It has deeply recessed windows and a simple Roman-style entrance portal. Unfortunately, it is now decaying due to the lack of steel or concrete in its construction. Two other religious monuments, Gurdwara Rakabganj and New Delhi's small mosque, which has former president Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad's maqbar, were built after 1947.

However, the greatest number of civic buildings in New Delhi were designed by Robert Torr Russell. He had succeeded John Begg as Consulting Architect to the
The central hall of Parliament House with a ninety-feet high dome. The death-knell of the empire was sounded from this central hall in 1947. The Constitution was drafted in the same hall.

The corridors of legislation

Government of India in 1919. Russell designed Connaught Place, Teen Murti House, and Eastern Court and Western Court. Connaught Circus, considered the most finely designed shopping mall of its time, consists of a series of two-storeyed stuccoed ranges with arcaded loggias at both levels. After 1947, a full three floors and in some cases a full four floors/levels have been added. Most ground floor shops have 'mezzanine' floors. In some cases 'basements' have been carved out. The middle level with British Motor Car Company was meant as a 'service lane' serving shops both in Connaught Place and Connaught Circus. All this has changed since independence. Intended as the central commercial hub of the city, it also provided a counterpart to Chandni Chowk, the commercial centre of the old city. Eastern Court and Western Court were built as lodgings for the members of the legislature. These have arcaded
verandas of a Tuscan order, which stand on massive raised basements. Russell's supposedly best work, Flagstaff House, comes closest to Lutyens' work. It was renamed Teen Murti House after it became the official residence of India's first prime minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Built in 1930, it is a long two-storeyed building executed in stucco with stone bandings that accentuate its strong horizontality. The house is situated on one of the principal axial vistas from the Viceroy's House, demonstrating the interdependent relationship between political and military power.

Apart from government buildings and churches, other buildings were also constructed. Gymkhana Club, previously functioning from Kashmir House, was

Hyderabad House was part of the 1916 plan of centrally located prime sites for the rulers of the states. These houses resembled the Viceroy's House in their hybrid design. Lutyens designed Hyderabad House, the costliest and largest of them, for the Nizam. It was built in the shape of a butterfly

Jaipur House now houses the National Gallery of Modern Art
completed in 1928. It offered all the facilities of a sports club, with a ballroom, bars, and card rooms. Derived from the Hindustani gend khana, meaning ball or racquet court, it was open only to the British and allowed membership to 'the elite natives' only after the Second World War.

As the Second World War began, the costly and prohibitive movement of officers and staff to Simla during the summer came to an end. This prompted further building activity. Very spacious bungalows for ministers and permanent secretaries and quarters for other senior officers and the babus of the regime were also constructed. Delhi expanded to accommodate this burgeoning staff. Many hutmens too were built to house new offices. Most of these 'temporary' structures exist even today.

Facing page
The All India War Memorial Arch, now India Gate, resplendent at night. The 140-foot monument was completed in 1931

Top
A memorial to Emperor George V was constructed in 1936, 500 feet east of the War Memorial

Bottom
The Amar Javan Jyoti, a memorial to the Unknown Soldier
Sacred Heart Church near the North Block designed by Henry Medd

Connaught Place, named after the King-Emperor’s uncle, later renamed Rajiv Gandhi Chowk, was designed by Robert Russell. Another giant circle marking the map of the new imperial city this is a large plaza, lined with shops and a centre of thriving business. Airy succecd colonades, punctuated by Palladian archways offer protection to shoppers from sun and rain. An aerial view

spoiling the ‘ordered beauty’ of Lutyens’ planned city centre.

New Delhi was entirely a government town and the Indian populace at large was excluded. Housing within the enclave was strictly hierarchical. There were palaces for the viceroy and the commander-in-chief. Lesser palaces were planned for the chiefs of the native states. All these were surrounded by parks. In a decreasing order of domestic grandeur came a whole set of bungalows, ranging from fine Tuscan-pillared villas of chief secretaries or high court judges to ‘four-rooms-and-a-verandah’ for an assistant chief controller of stores to terraced huts for Indian peons. To quote Jan Morris, ‘Caste was as carefully honoured in the disposition of these houses as ever it was among the Hindus.’ Pockets of land were allotted according to status: ruling princes were given four to eight acres, gazetted officers were allowed two to three and a half acres, members of the legislature a quarter acre, and so on.

The central and state PWDs and their offshoots such as the Delhi Development Authority (established provisionally in 1955 and finally in 1957 when it absorbed the Delhi Improvement Trust) continued working much as before independence. They were primarily involved in the design of public buildings and large-scale housing development. A major concern in all their work was the standardization and the hierarchical classification apparent in colonial building practices that have prove difficult to shed.
The National Museum was supposed to stand along with the National Library, Oriental Institute, and the Imperial Record Office (now called the National Archives of India) at the junction of Kingsway (Rajpath) and Queensway (Janpath) forming a cultural and intellectual plaza. Lutyens never completed the projected plaza, and it remained a plan only on the drawing board. Individual buildings, the National Museum, and the National Archives were eventually completed.

Supreme Court, built by the CPWD in 1955, G.B. Deolalikar, the first Indian to head the CPWD, designed the building. It is deemed to be heavy-handed in comparison with the elegance of either Fatehpur Sikri, or of Lutyens’ or Baker’s work.

in 1958) was designed by Deolalikar in an Indo-British architectural style as it is located in Lutyens’ complex. The chhatris have square 15x15 inch columnar supports which stand in strong contrast to the elegance of those at Fatehpur Sikri or in Lutyens’ or Baker’s work.

Vigyan Bhavan (1955), designed by R. I. Gehlot of the CPWD for large international conferences, has the influence of Buddhist, Hindu, and Mughal architecture. The large entrance is of black marble and glass, and is shaped in the form of a Chaitya arch of the Ajanta style. The floor-to-ceiling windows on each side are spanned by similar Chaitya arches.

Not only government offices, but also institutional and commercial buildings (often under state sponsorship) followed similar plans. The main buildings use elements of the Buddhist arch. Sapru House, designed for the Indian Council of World Affairs, is an example. It has a stone-faced facade with formal elements drawn from the stupas at Sanchi. Ashok Hotel (1955) in New Delhi, though not entirely a CPWD building, was built to house dignitaries at the first conference hosted by independent India. The facilities were modern, but the exterior combines elements of Mughal architecture on its facade, jaali work as at the Taj Mahal, huge jharokhaas, supported by brackets with chhatris against the skyline.

The three major demographic changes of Delhi during 1857, 1911, and 1947 were all due to political decisions. With freedom also came partition and with partition came the unending waves of migrants from Pakistan. Many Muslims also left for Pakistan. Delhi, which until the advent of freedom was a city with a population of less than a million, expanded drastically. The first census after independence (1951) put
the population of the union territory at about 1.74 million. The last report (1991 census) puts its population at 9,420,644. Its area is 1483 square kilometres, quite small for a city, which is the third largest in India, and also has a number of villages in its fold.

Around 1947, the railway line near Old Safdarjung Road, now no longer in use, used to be the southern limit of the city. Near this were Gymkhana Club, Delhi Racecourse, Aerodrome, Air Mail Station, Delhi Flying Club, and Wireless Mart. Now it extends even beyond Qutub Minar. In recent years its expansion towards the Jumana par area beyond the river Yamuna has been phenomenal. In the old days, only Shahdara used to be known as the area in the trans-Yamuna region. Now it has expanded up to Ghaziabad and Noida in the east, entering the Uttar Pradesh border, while its other three sides touch the Haryana border.

Migration to the city in recent decades has been phenomenal. Against the earlier migrants, like the Punjabi-speaking Hindus and Sikhs, the recent migrants have come from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, principally from the labour classes. This has accelerated the growth of slums. Simultaneously, the influx of professionals and other employed classes from various parts of India, such as Bengalis, Tamils, Kannadigas, Maharashtrians, Gujaratis, has given the city a more cosmopolitan outlook.

The villages have been converted into housing and commercial complexes as Delhi has gradually become the hub of commercial activity. According to the 1991 census, 89.93 per cent of Delhi's population has been living in the urban parts, making it the highest urbanized region in the country.

Since 1911, Delhi was ruled by a chief commissioner. In 1956, it was converted into

[Image of Vayu Bhavan, housing the Air Headquarters, Vayu Bhavan, Krishi Bhavan, Udyog Bhavan, and Rail Bhavan are other post-Independence buildings that aim to emulate Lutyens' design]
a union territory and a Lieutenant-governor gradually replaced the chief commissioner. Its demand for the status of statehood was fulfilled only after the National Capital Territory Act, 1991 was passed by Parliament in 1993.

Delhi has its own municipal corporation and New Delhi Municipal Committee for the official New Delhi. It has also been divided into nine districts and has been electorally divided into seven parliamentary constituencies.

In 1955, while a barrage over the Yamuna was being built to prevent contamination of river water from the effluents discharged from the Najafgarh nullah, the central government set up the DD(P)A along with the Town Planning Organization charged with the task of developing 'a skeleton Master Plan for Delhi'. The hurriedly assembled team of planners produced an Interim General Plan by October 1956. Subsequently, the DDA was established by an act of Parliament replacing the erstwhile DD(P)A.

The draft of the first master plan for
Delhi was prepared by the erstwhile Town Planning Organization for the DDA. Developed in a metropolitan regional context, the plan was approved by the central government in September 1962. Thus, the Delhi plan was the first-ever exercise in comprehensive spatial planning undertaken in India. The National Capital Region Planning Board Act was passed in 1985 to make a ‘manageable Delhi by AD 2001 with a population of 112 lakhs’. The plan was to identify and move government and public sector offices — which do not perform ministerial, protocol, or liaison functions, provide incentives, concessions and infrastructures — to the regional towns (inside Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Punjab) to encourage and accelerate the growth of trade. Out of the proposed 1000 government offices to be moved out, only thirty have been moved during the last decade.

Planned as an imperial city by Edwin Lutyens, a garden city based on the geometry of a triangle and a hexagon, New Delhi was reincarnated as the capital of the new republic. Since then the city has undergone a metamorphosis. In the first place, it is part of a growing metropolis, that is Delhi. High-rise buildings have ruined Connaught Place, spoiling the skyline so prized by the architects, planners, and builders of New Delhi. Second, notwithstanding the large-scale changes that have taken place in the original city, there still are significant areas of the city that retain its original design pattern, including certain key elements. They deserve conservation, even preservation.

At the turn of the century, New Delhi forms an integral part of the Delhi continuum; a continuum in which many cities came, flourished, and vanished, each leaving its own imprint, in the process becoming part of a larger Delhi heritage. In Narayani Gupta’s words: ‘The various histories that make up Delhi make a tale of many cities, an endless game of discovery.’

The Bahá’í House of Worship, completed in 1986, was designed by Fariborz Sahba. ▼