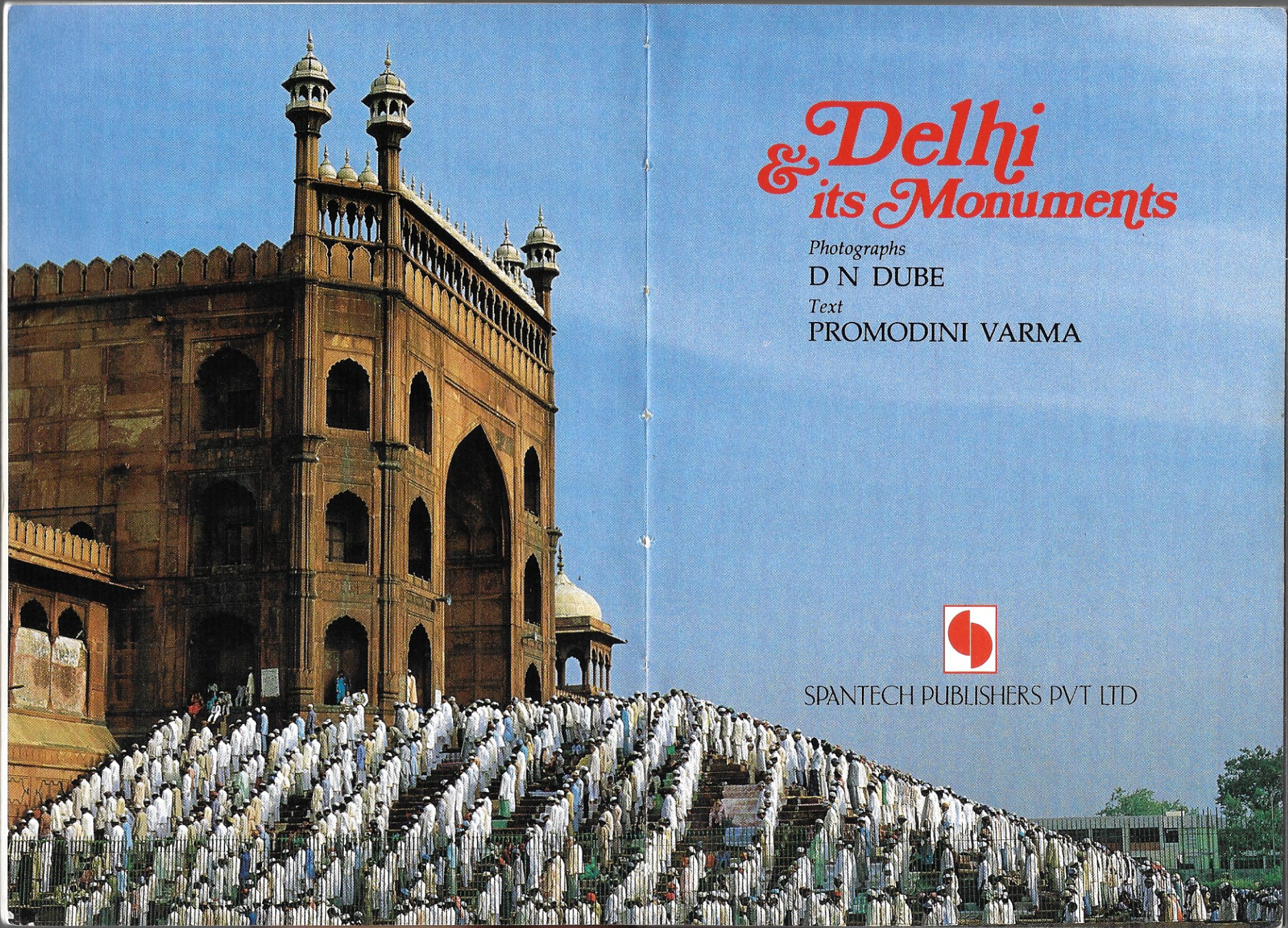


*& Delhi
its Monuments*



Delhi & its Monuments

Photographs

D N DUBE

Text

PROMODINI VARMA



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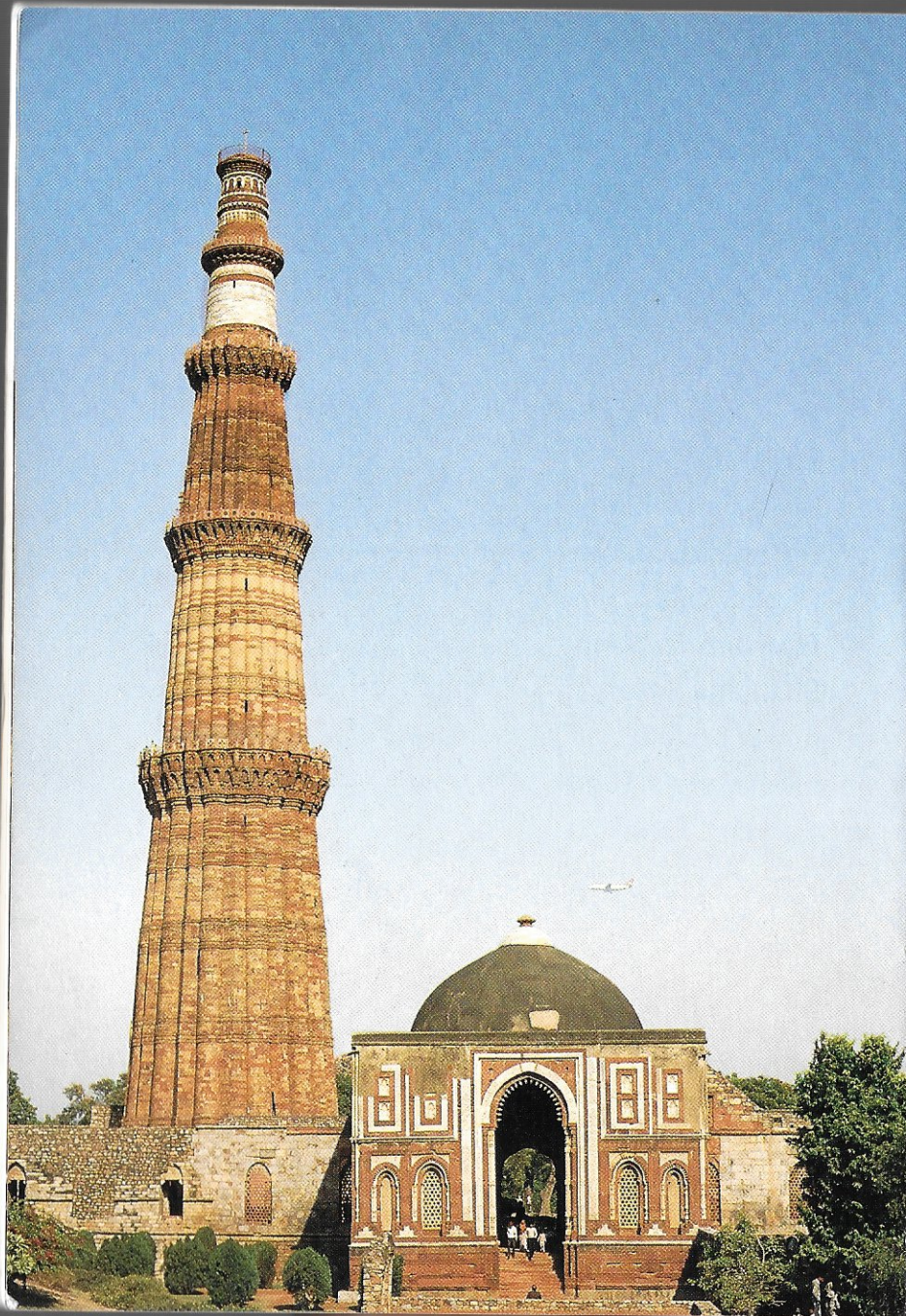
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Introduction

Few cities in the world could match Delhi's antecedents or the profusion and variety of its monuments—a city almost as rich as Rome and nearly as spectacular as Athens. With its seven cities (fourteen according to some) and thirteen names, it has been described as 'a fidgety girl who will sit here, and there, then somewhere else and fifty square miles of ground and twenty thousand ruins tell where it has rested'. Indeed, we are fortunate that the marks left behind by this 'fidgety girl' are still so clear, still available to us. The monuments of Delhi are a veritable museum of architectural splendours and chronicle the successive stages in the development of architectural style in India. Though just about every book on Delhi—and there has been a deluge of these recently—gives a nod in the direction of Delhi's monuments, there is very little information available specifically on them. Without making any pretensions to original scholarship, this book attempts to put together all the material that lies scattered in obscure volumes and scholarly treatises and embellish it with breath-taking photographs that invite you to come and see for yourself. Hopefully, this book will also increase in equal measure the awareness of the local resident and the curiosity of the visitor with regard to the numerous monuments that dot Delhi's varied landscape. However, the number of monuments in Delhi is so large—1300 listed by the Archaeological Survey of India—that it is well-nigh impossible to treat them all in one volume, particularly if one wants to give them the sort of attention which goes beyond mere identification and cataloguing. This

OPPOSITE *The Qutb Minar with the Alai Darwaza.*

volume has, therefore, had to limit itself to the more prominent monuments of the city.

The history of Delhi—shrouded in the mists of myth and legend on the one hand and complicated with the profusion of dynasties and clans on the other—is so complex that I have not involved myself with it except where it impinges directly on the monuments themselves. Even then, I have confined myself to the main outlines, the essentials that provide the context in which the monuments are to be viewed if they are to make sense. However, a few words to bridge the gaps that have inevitably resulted are in order.

The earliest references to Delhi are to be found in Buddhist and Jaina sources where Delhi is often referred to as Indapatta, Hathinapura and Yoginipura. These literary texts, however, cannot be dated precisely even though their chronological sequence is generally agreed upon. Later, in the Indian epic the *Mahabharata*, composed around 900 BC, Delhi is referred to as Indraprastha, the city founded by the Pandavas on the bank of the river Yamuna. Archaeological excavations in the Purana Qila area have yielded shards from around the first millennium BC. It is significant too, that up to the beginning of the present century a village named Inderpat (derived from Indraprastha) existed within the Purana Qila itself. It was cleared by the British in their search for a suitable site for the new imperial city to be built at Delhi. After the Pandavas, Delhi seems to have gone into a decline and Greek travellers of the pre-Christian era who visited India, Nearchus and Megasthenes, make no mention of it. Neither do the famous Chinese travellers Fah-Hian and Hiuen Tsiang. Ptolemy, the Greek geographer, in the first or second century AD, however, does mark a Daidala close to the site of Indraprastha, which could be a reference to Delhi.

The recorded history of Delhi begins with Raja Anangpal who built his fort in the Qutb area. He was succeeded by the Chauhans who were defeated in 1192 AD by Muhammad bin Sam of Ghur alias Muhammad Ghori of Afghanistan. Ghori was not the first Muslim invader of India but he was

the first to aim at establishing an empire rather than just looting and pillaging. He installed Qutb-ud-din Aibak, a faithful slave, in Delhi when he himself returned to Afghanistan. On Ghori's death in 1206, Qutb-ud-din established the Slave or Mamluk dynasty that ruled for eighty-four years and produced in Razia Sultan, the first woman ruler of Delhi, and in Balban, a man of decisive action. The Slave dynasty was superseded by the Khaljis whose second and greatest ruler, Ala-ud-din, a crude but daring political economist, established Siri, the second city of Delhi, a few miles north-east of Lal Kot, early in the fourteenth century. Siri was a flourishing, prosperous settlement with a palace of a thousand pillars (Hazaar-Sutun), a Jama Masjid (Friday Mosque) and a mausoleum that Ala-ud-din had built for himself. This city and all its monuments are now completely lost.

A word about the so-called seven 'cities' of Delhi. These were, in fact, settlements that sprang up around newly built palaces or citadels that forceful sultans constructed as a means of identification, even individualization. Of course, the location of each city was also dictated by practical necessities. The earliest settlements were in the stony foothills of the Aravali range because defensive constructions there were easier. Later settlements moved northwards in search of water and the last three, Firozabad, Dinpanah and Shahjahanabad, were built right on the bank of the river Yamuna.

The Tughluqs, who succeeded the Khaljis, produced three brilliant kings in a row. Ghas-ud-din, the founder of the dynasty, was an inveterate campaigner. Muhammad bin Tughluq, his son, was a man of far-reaching ideas though much misunderstood. Firoz, his successor, was a noted administrator. The Tughluqs were followed in quick succession by the Sayyids and the Lodis, who in turn gave way to the Mughals when Babur defeated Sikander Lodi at Panipat in 1526. The Mughals (from the word 'Mongol', though the Mughals were as much Turks as Mongols) ruled India for the next three hundred years, except for a hiatus of fifteen years, from 1540 to 1555, when the Afghan Surs



Raj Ghat, the samadhi of Mahatma Gandhi.

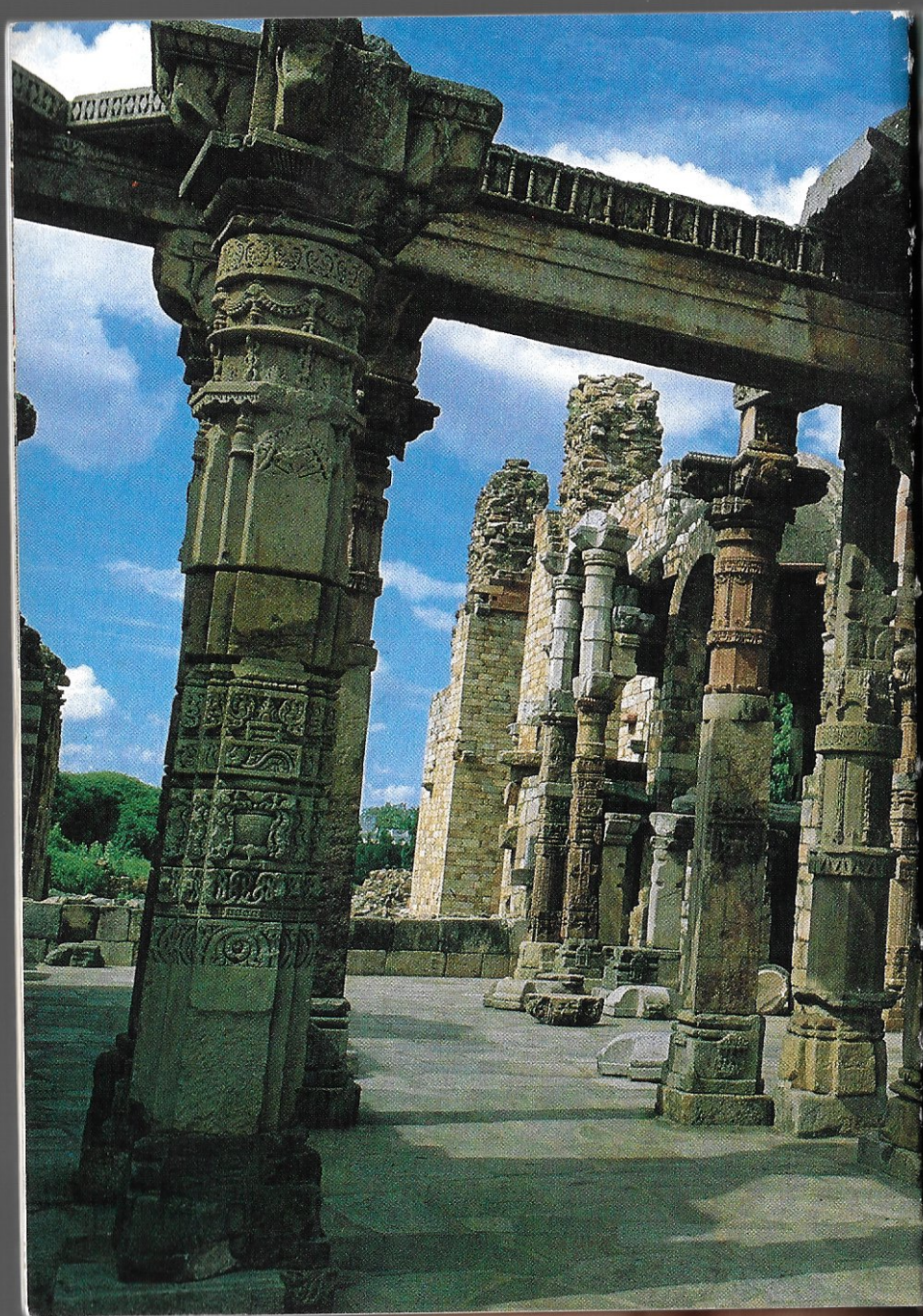
wrested the empire from Humayun, Babur's son. Though the Mughals lasted till 1857, they ceased to be a force to reckon with after Aurangzeb, the sixth in the line. The decline of the Mughals marked the ascendancy of the British, who wore this brightest of jewels in their crown till August 1947, when India became a free nation. Delhi went wild with joy as Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first Prime Minister, unfurled the national flag on the ramparts of the Red Fort, and then plunged into gloom as thousands of refugees, narrating heart-rending tales of woe, started pouring into the city from the newly created state of Pakistan. The nadir was reached on 30 January 1948 when Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, was shot dead in Birla House. The history of Delhi, as of India, continues to be written and some of it is much too recent to be evaluated.

For all practical purposes, the architectural history of the city begins only in 1193, for the remains of its proto-historic and historic periods lie buried deep or housed within museums. The fragments of the temples that have been used to build the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque in the Qutb complex, though much mutilated, bear witness to the Hindu civilization that preceded the Muslim in Delhi. Dated to the eighth or ninth century AD, they are in the style of the temples at Mount Abu in Rajasthan and Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh, constructed in the same period.

The early Muslim invaders of India were not a homogeneous lot. Many were Turks from Central Asia but long settled in Afghanistan; many were true-blue Afghans, others Iranians. There were, therefore, a host of influences acting upon the early Islamic architecture of India. As time went on, however, the Persian or Iranian influence would prove to be the strongest.

When they first came into contact, the Hindu and Islamic styles of architecture were different because the philosophy of life underlying them was widely divergent even though they were later to fuse into a glorious new style creating a wholly new vocabulary and an entirely new structure. Much later, this would be even more true of the composite Indian and Western style that came into this country via the British. But while the Muslims mingled and accepted as much as they imposed, the British did not, so that the Eastern and the Western never quite coalesced except in brief and rare encounters. At its best, then, Indo-Islamic art is not merely a local variety of Islamic art or even a qualified form of Hindu art. It derives from both but it also supersedes both. It would be useful, therefore, to begin with a clear idea of the basics of the Hindu and Islamic forms of architecture.

The fundamental pattern of a Hindu temple is simple. It consists of a cella or an enclosed sacred space (*garbh-griha*) in the centre of which stands the image of the deity. Around



the cella is an ambulatory and one or more small halls for worshippers, and over the cella a high conical tower (the *shikhar*). Whereas ancient Hindu temples were literally excavated out of huge rocks, medieval temples were built on the beam and lintel or trabeate system, enclosing space by laying bricks or stones in corbels so that the open space was gradually reduced to a size which could be covered with a single slab. Conceived of as sculpted masses of stone, the temple became an elaborate combination of architecture and sculpture. Profusely carved, plastered and painted, decorated with painted and dyed cloth hangings, the more important ones were embellished with precious metals and gems and fabulously rich (thus attracting the greed of the early Muslim invader, like Mahmud of Ghazni). The temple embraced the whole of life, fusing the physical and the spiritual, the ascetic and the sensual, the transient and the eternal.

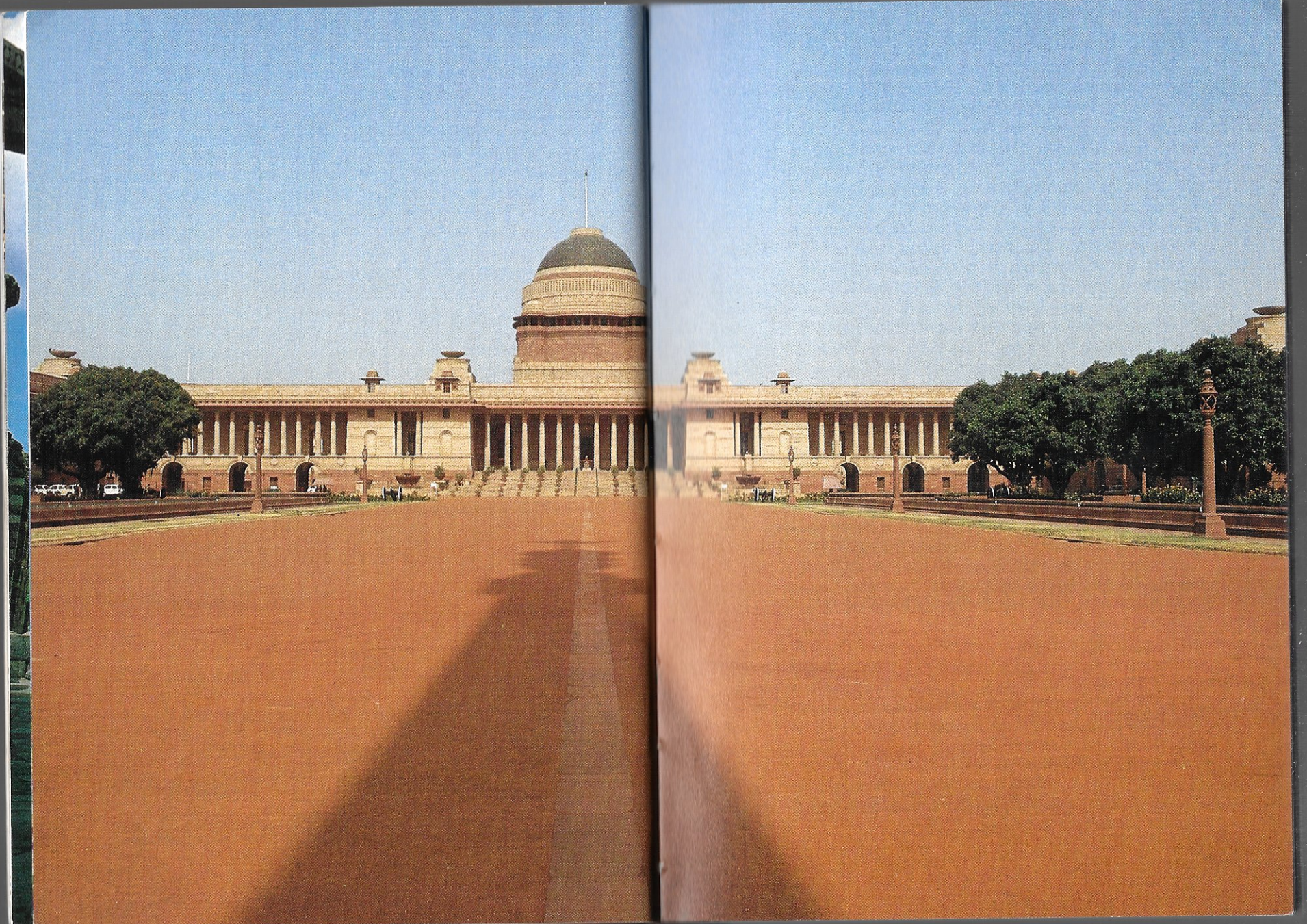
The Lakshmi Narain Temple.



The Muslims are enjoined to pray five times a day, their faces turned towards the holy city of Mecca. The Friday afternoon prayer is prescribed as congregational. Though the congregational prayer can be held on any clean, level piece of land, the vagaries of weather and the only too human desire for form led the Muslims to construct mosques. Basically the mosque, like the temple, is a simple structure. It consists of a spacious courtyard with a prayer hall at one end, with alcoves or recesses (*mehrab*) in its rear wall to indicate the direction of prayer. In India the prayer hall always faces west, that being the direction of Mecca. The mosque also usually has a pulpit for the Imam or the leader of the prayer. Originally the call for prayer was sent out from the roof of the mosque. Later, a tower or minaret was built for the purpose, and still later the minaret became merely a decorative feature. A gallery or compartment is sometimes screened off to accommodate ladies who observe *pardah* (the veil). The main entrance is from the east and a tank is provided in the courtyard for ritual ablutions before prayer.

The Hindus, who do not believe in the finality of death, have no funerary constructions, while the Muslims, though ordained by Islam not to do so, raise elaborate and ornate monuments to their dead. The tomb generally consists of a central chamber containing the cenotaph with a *mehrab* in the western wall. The real grave is usually housed in an underground chamber so that the sleep of the dead is not disturbed by the living. As time passed the mausoleum became even more elaborate, with numerous underground cells, gardens, attached mosques and side pavilions for the use of the family of the deceased, when necessary. Yet, one must admit that at its best the mausoleum in Indian Muslim architecture is hardly a surrender to death. It is, on the contrary, a most magnificent affirmation of life, and the tomb of Humayun at Delhi, of Akbar at Sikandra and the Taj Mahal at Agra are nothing if not that.

OVERLEAF *The Rashtrapati Bhawan, Lutyens' masterpiece.*



The use of the arch and the dome or the arcuate system is generally considered to be Islamic while the trabeate system or the use of the beam and lintel, and corbelling or the slight projection of stone slabs or courses of masonry over those of the lower layer to form a pyramidal structure or a ceiling is considered to be Hindu. (It is just as well to point out, though, that the arcuate system was developed by the Romans and therefore is much older than Islam just as the trabeate system, a carry-over from building in timber, is much older than Hinduism.) It is also generally believed that it was the Muslims who introduced the technique of building the true arch and the true dome in India. Though there is some evidence in the early Buddhist caves that Hindu masons may have been familiar with the correct method of arch building, it is certain that they had quite forgotten it by the twelfth century. Therefore early Muslim arches in India, as in the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque in the Qutb complex are corbelled, i.e. built not with radiating stones in the correct arcuate fashion but with successive projections of the upper layer over the lower till the gap between pillars can be bridged by a single slab.

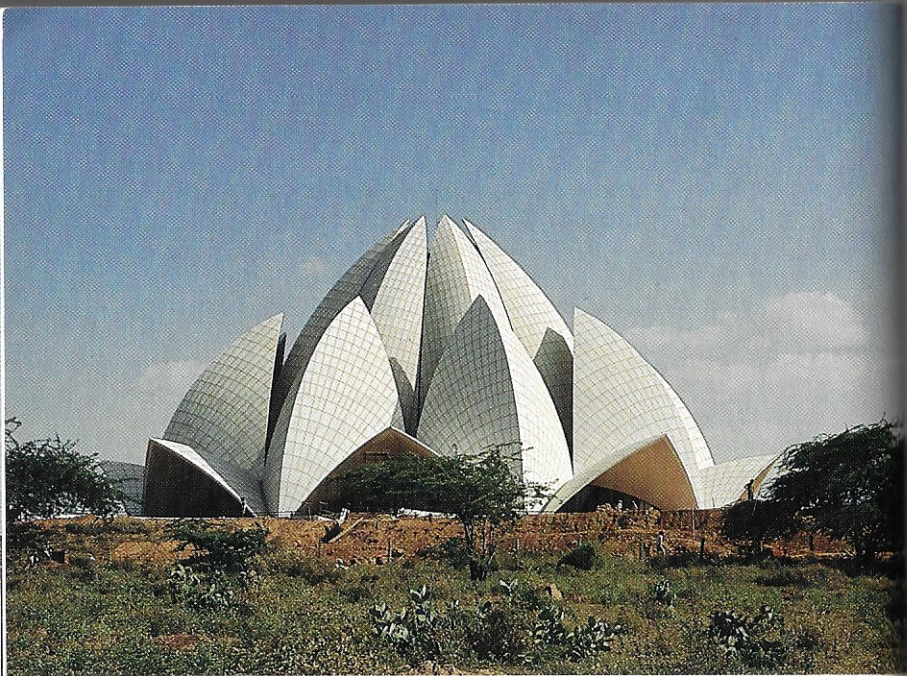
Islam forbids idolatry as well as all human, animal and natural representation. The artist was, therefore, perforce thrown back on geometric forms and a preoccupation with proportion and symmetry. Arches, domes and minarets, and colour through tiles and shades of stone become all important. The Hindu craftsman, on the other hand, was an expert at surface ornamentation and delighted in delineating all of nature in all its variegated forms on every inch of the temple walls.

In spite of some striking contrasts between the Hindu and Islamic styles, there were also points of resemblance which favoured their fusion: both were inherently decorative and both could be easily adapted. It is the history of this fusion that the monuments of Delhi chart. The process begins early—practically with the very first architectural attempts of the Muslims. But at this stage it is very crude and consists mainly of juxtaposition—the superimposition of Islamic

features upon Hindu structures. In the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque at the Qutb the carved columns, lintels and ceiling-slabs from Hindu temples are used on an as-is-where-is basis to form the outline of a mosque. As Islamic architecture advanced, however, its first instinct was to break away from the local and the indigenous, though it never fully succeeded because the artists and artisans were local and deeply steeped in the indigenous tradition. Later, however, a conscious and deliberate fusion was attempted which began to grow creative with the Tughluqs, the Lodis and the Surs. The importance of Mughal architecture lay in its ability to assimilate and digest the Islamic and the Hindu building traditions to create a synthesis both unique and superb. This tradition reached its peak with Shah Jahan.

About three hundred years later a similar creative fusion, this time between the Indian and the European, was attempted by Edwin Lutyens in his work at New Delhi. Despite Lutyens' constant and numerous disclaimers regarding the influence of Mughal and Hindu styles upon his work, his architecture at New Delhi displays a remarkably successful and inspired fusion of the building traditions of the East and the West. Post-independence architecture, though heavily influenced by the reinforced concrete and fibre glass style of the latest building fad in the West, continues the attempt to marry the traditional architecture of this country with its modern needs. The search for a new formula that will reflect the present without ignoring the past and yet not be simply hybrid, is still on.

Finally, some of the local terms used in this book must be explained. Certain architectural features are so wholly Indian that it makes more sense to use the local term rather than an inadequate translation, though an attempt has also been made to provide an equivalent within the text itself. The *masjid*, of course, is a mosque and the *mehrab* the niche in the western wall of the prayer hall. *Qibla* is the direction to Mecca, the holy city of the Muslims. *Namaaz* is the prescribed Muslim prayer said five times a day and *pardah* the principle of seclusion observed by Muslim women. The *chhajja* is a



The Baha'i Temple, the latest architectural wonder, is built in the shape of a half open lotus.

cornice of stone slabs overhanging the walls like the wood and tiled eaves of Spanish and Italian buildings. The *chhattri* is the small open canopied pavilion that surmounts the roof and a symbol of royalty. The *jaali* is the screen of perforated and carved stone that will let in air but very little sun light. A *darwaza* is a gateway and *jharokha* an overhanging gallery somewhat like an oriel window. A *nahr* is a stream and a *serai* an inn.

The Qutb Complex

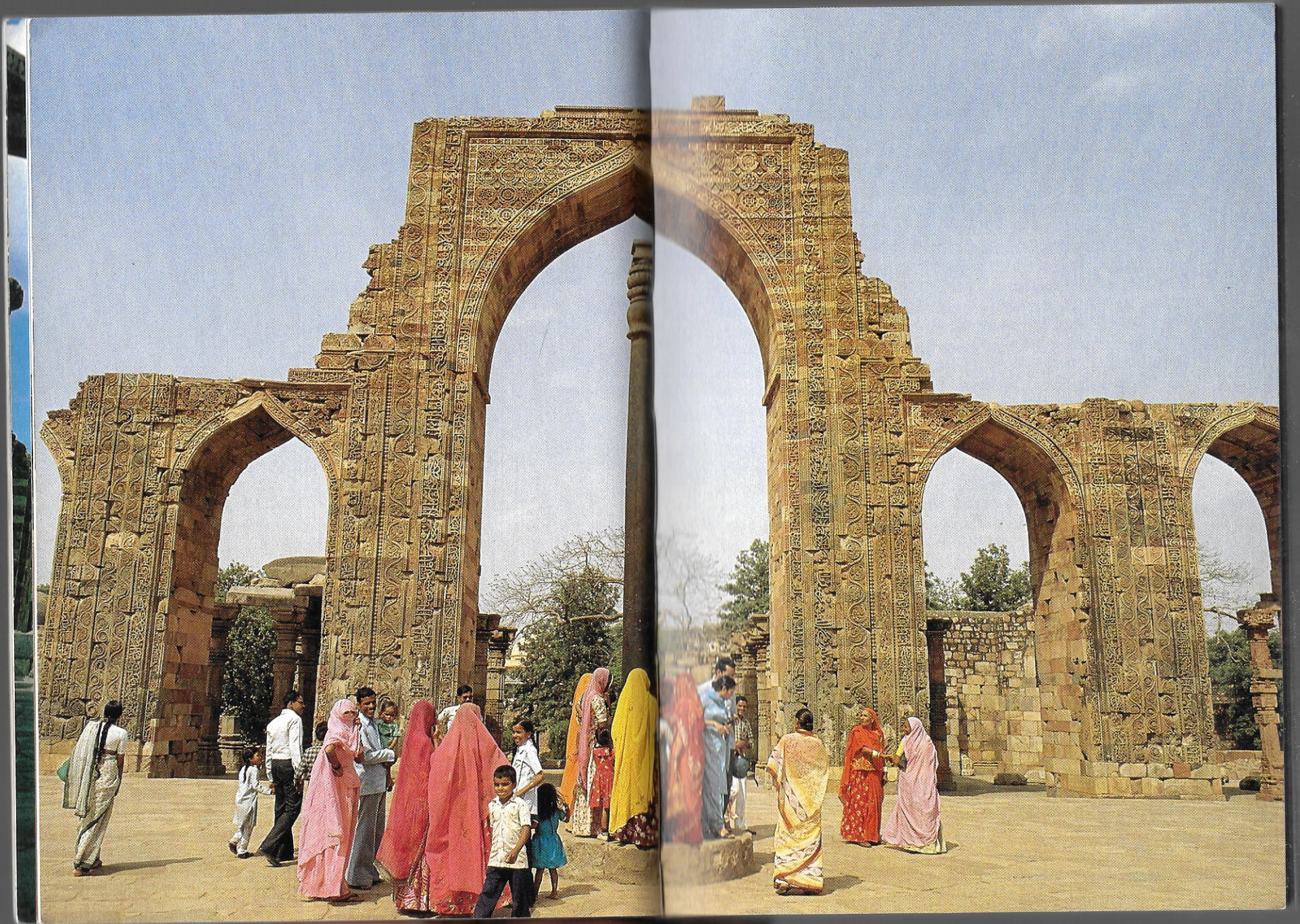
The Qutb complex is the most complicated of the monuments at Delhi. Built, rebuilt, enlarged, devastated and reassembled, it marks the site of the first recorded settlement at Delhi and contains some of the earliest monuments extant in the city—and some, like the Iron Pillar, of hoary antiquity transferred from another site and another age altogether.

The earliest settlement at Delhi was that of the Tomars—Hindu Rajput chieftains who, sometime in the eleventh century, transferred their capital from Suraj Kund, a tiny rocky valley five kilometres from Tughluqabad, to Dhilli or Dhillika as it was then known. Heralded in bardic tradition as the 'Founder of Delhi' the third Tomar ruler, Raja Anangpal, built Lal Kot (the Red Citadel) at the site of the Qutb, its ramparts extending to the north and west of the minar.

Folklore credits Lal Kot with several gates and two stone lions that stood guard outside. A bell hung nearby that could be rung by any aggrieved person to ask the king a favour or to demand justice. Raja Anangpal, it is said, also installed in his citadel an Iron Pillar, a standard or flagpost of Lord Vishnu, the highest of the gods in the Hindu pantheon. It was believed that the pillar rested on the forehead of the divine serpent Seshnag, who, according to Hindu mythology, also supports the earth.

Lal Kot survives now only in its thick stone-built ramparts, up to 3 metres in thickness, some towers and gates. Originally, a moat ran along the ramparts. Though the ruins of several structures can be traced within the ramparts, no

OVERLEAF The Iron Pillar framed within the arches of the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque.



palace or its remains have been located. The cast-iron pillar, however, still stands. It is evidently transposed from elsewhere, for no other relics of the fourth century AD—to which the pillar is dated—have been found in the vicinity, though two similar pillars, one made of iron and the other of stone, have been found in central India. Made of 99.72 per cent malleable iron, the Iron Pillar has weathered the last sixteen hundred years practically without rusting. A solid shaft 7.20 metres in length, it has a capital a metre long. The base of the pillar, embedded into the earth, is bulbous, with pieces of iron grounding it firmly. It bears an inscription in Sanskrit in the Brahmi script (the earliest known of the Indian scripts) according to which the pillar was set up as a standard of Lord Vishnu on Vishnupada Hill in the memory of the mighty King Chandra (who, it is conjectured, is the same as Chandragupta II who ruled from AD 380 to 413). A deep hole at the top of the pillar suggests that it was topped by another member bearing perhaps the image of Garuda, the vulture—the mount of Lord Vishnu. Hindu deities can often be identified by their mounts or vehicles, such as Shiva by the bull, Ganesh by the mouse and Saraswati by the swan.

In the twelfth century the Tomars were defeated by the Rajput Chauhans and Lal Kot passed into their hands. The last of the Chauhans, Prithviraj III (or Rai Pithora as the early Muslim historians loved to call him) extended Lal Kot by throwing up a second rubble wall on the northern, eastern and western sides in an attempt to defend his settlement from the marauding Turks and Afghans. Prithviraj was the stuff legends are made of and has been immortalized in numerous songs and ballads. He wooed and abducted (with the lady's consent) the beautiful daughter of the greatest king in India at that time, Raja Jaichand of Kannauj. In the winter of 1190–1, when Muhammad Ghori, the usurper of the Ghaznavid kingdom in Afghanistan, marched beyond the Punjab dreaming of establishing a kingdom in the lush and fertile Hindustan, Prithviraj organized the Rajputs against him. However, Jaichand,

insulted and annoyed, held aloof. Prithviraj defeated Muhammad Ghori then, but within months Ghori was back, better prepared and more determined. A second battle was fought at the same site—Tarain—and Prithviraj was defeated and taken prisoner. Thus did Delhi pass into the hands of the Muslims and become a part of the Ghurid empire, with its capital at Ghazni.

According to some, Prithviraj's citadel Qila Rai Pithora, which included Lal Kot within it, was the first of the traditional seven cities of Delhi. Qila Rai Pithora had thirteen gates, according to Amir Timur, the Turkish invader of India in the fourteenth century. Of these, the Hauz-Rani, Barka and Budaun gates have survived. Ibn Batuta, the Moroccan who resided in Delhi from 1333 to 1342, records that the Budaun gate was the main entrance to the city. Hasan Nizami, a contemporary of Muhammad Ghori, writes that Prithviraj's fortress 'in height and strength had not its equal nor second throughout the length and breadth of the seven climes'—a bit exaggerated, perhaps to enhance the glory of the conqueror, for the ramparts that have survived do not bear out the claim. Rubble built, five to six metres in thickness and eighteen metres in height at some points, large portions of the wall are completely lost while most of what survives is covered by debris.

The Dhillika of the Tomars and the Chauhans was not a great city. It certainly could not compete with the great capitals of India like Pataliputra and Kannauj, which had developed into prominent centres of learning and trade. It did, however, boast of twenty-seven Hindu and Jain temples, though even these could not have been on the grand scale of temples being built in other parts of the country around this time. This is evident from what remains of these temples in the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque which was erected from their architectural spoils.

The Ghurid kingdom in Afghanistan disintegrated quickly after Muhammad's assassination in 1206 but his Indian possessions gave birth to a new empire, the Delhi Sultanate, or the rule of Turkish and Afghan sultans over

northern India. When he returned to Ghazni, Muhammad left his Indian territories in the care of his generals, one of whom, Qutb-ud-din Aibak, ruled from Delhi on the death of his master. He founded what came to be known as the Slave dynasty, for he had once been a slave.

Qutb-ud-din Aibak established himself in the Chauhan citadel of Qila Rai Pithora at Delhi and it was he and the early Afghan-Turkish conquerors who raised the status of Delhi from a provincial capital when they started building their city around the fortress they had captured. Thus came into existence a Jama Masjid (Friday Mosque) later called the Quwwat-ul-Islam (Might of Islam) with the Qutb Minar beside it. A new fort close to the north of the old fort was also built but has now been completely lost.

A military leader of great excellence as well as a man of refinement and generosity, Qutb-ud-din Aibak started building the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque in AD 1193 much before he became emperor. Barring the remains of the first Arab occupation in Sind (now Kutch in north-western India) this mosque is the oldest Islamic monument in India—an architectural expression of victory as well as a booster to self-confidence for the limited number of Muslims in a predominantly Hindu land. It displays on the one hand the sense of uncertainty and the improvisation that mark early Muslim monuments in India, and on the other a grace and energy that is remarkable. The builders of these early monuments struggled not only to impose Persian and Arabic forms on indigenous ones, they struggled to do it through Hindu craftsmen, who, though highly skilled, were trained in a very different tradition. They had not only to improvise but also to compromise, which fortunately was to result in a striking and unique expression of Islamic art and architecture in India.

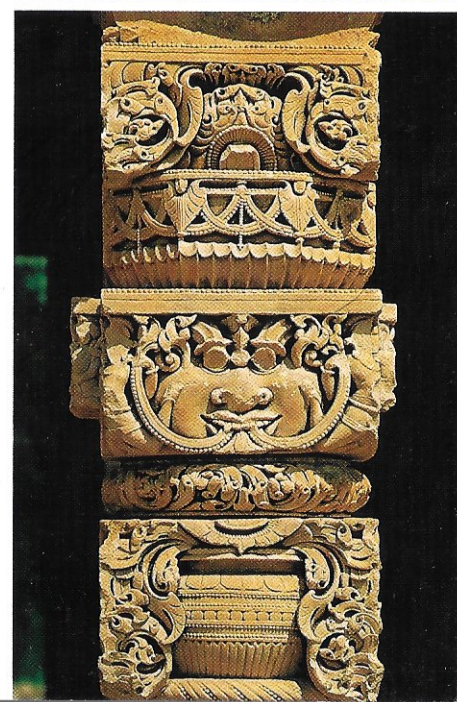
The Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque and the buildings around it are the work, principally, of three great kings of the Sultanate: Qutb-ud-din Aibak (1206–11), his successor and son-in-law Shams-ud-din Iltutmish (1211–36) and Ala-ud-din Khalji (1296–1316) the second ruler of the Khalji dynasty



ABOVE LEFT Detail of the arch of Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque built by Qutb-ud-din Aibak.

ABOVE RIGHT Detail of the arch of Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque built by Iltutmish.

RIGHT Hindu motifs on one of the pillars of the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque.



that succeeded the so-called Slave dynasty. The innermost court of the mosque with its corridors and west end was built by Qutb-ud-din in 1193, the western portion occupying the original site of one of the demolished temples.

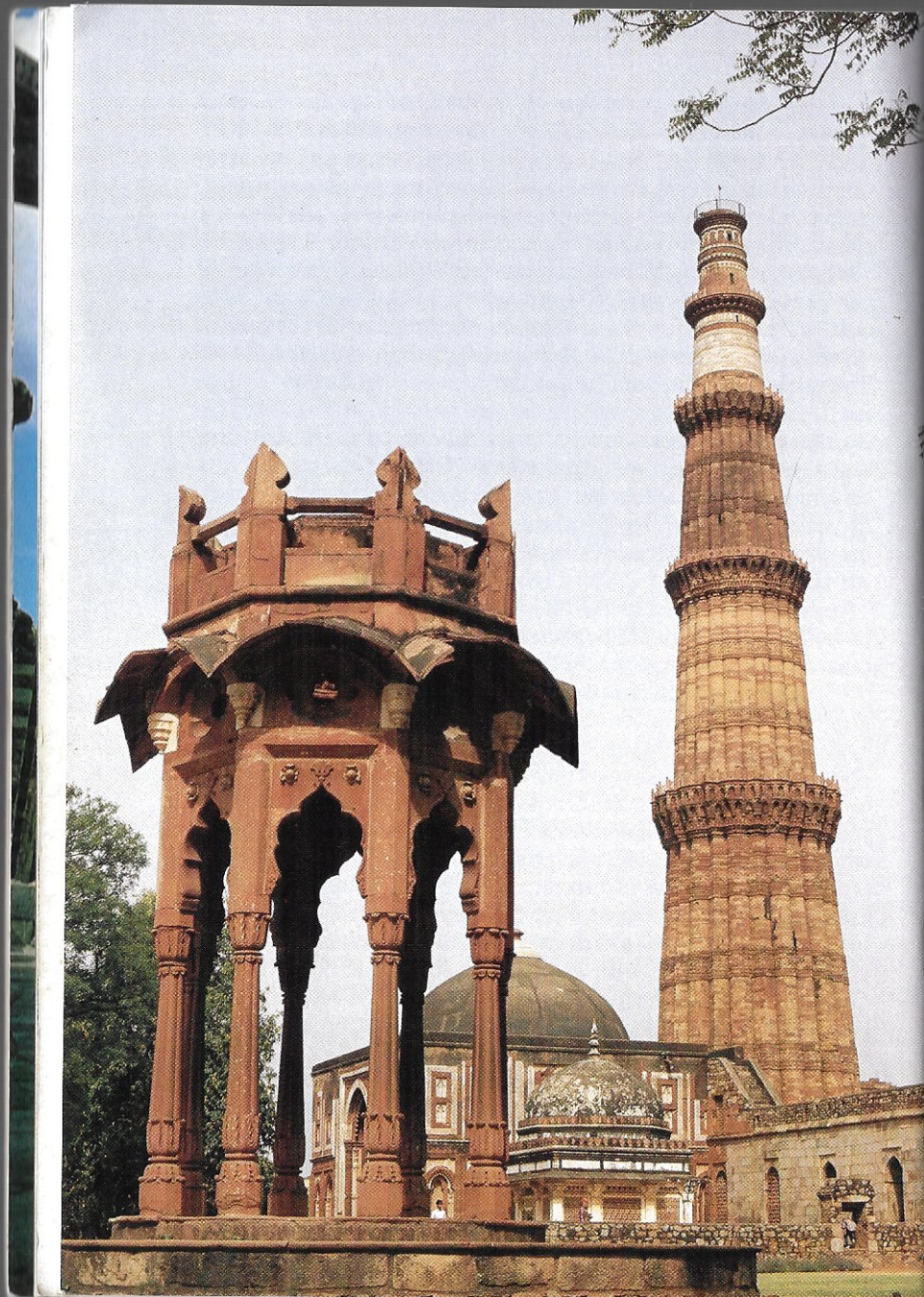
The main gate of the mosque was to the east and it is this gateway that contains the inscription declaring that the mosque was built by Qutb-ud-din Aibak out of the architectural remains of the twenty-seven Hindu and Jain temples that he had destroyed. There are two other gateways to the inner courtyard, one to the north and the other to the south, but the south side gateway has completely disappeared, together with much of the colonnade. The eastern colonnade, however, has survived and contains some striking sculptures well worth identifying. The floor of the inner courtyard is slightly higher than that of the arcades and has drains cut into it.

The richly decorated shafts of the colonnade, in some cases consisting of two pillars, one on top of the other to gain the requisite height, seem rather incongruous in a mosque, ornamented as they are with typical Hindu motifs of tasselled ropes and bells, flying celestials, and even Hindu deities like Shiva and Vishnu. The iconoclast Muslims, in their zeal to put up the mosque, used the remains of the temples they had demolished to constitute their mosque, and when they could not disfigure and mutilate the carvings they covered them with a thick coat of plaster. Fortunately, the plaster has now fallen, revealing the pillars in all their rich beauty. In another typically Hindu touch, the eastern side of the mosque, as in a temple, has been markedly emphasized—the colonnade, only three deep on the north and south sides, is four deep on the east. The eastern side also contains an intermediate storey to accommodate ladies.

Some time later (perhaps in 1204) Qutb-ud-din added a massive free-standing stone screen to the western side, in front of the prayer hall. It consisted of a central arch 6.7 metres wide and 16 metres high, and two similar but smaller arches on either side. This great screen, to which Iltutmish added another two on either side later, bears no proportion

to the arcades any more than does the Qutb to the mosque. However, that does not seem to detract from their effectiveness. Built by Hindu craftsmen who had no notion of how the true Islamic arch was built, the arches are joined up in horizontal courses as far as possible and then closed by long slabs. Beautifully carved with geometrical and arabesque designs and bands of Koranic text, the hand of Hindu craftsmen is evident in the tendril and flowing flower and bud patterns and in the intricate and delicate carvings that decorate the arches. The stone used in the arches built by Iltutmish—the last two on either side—is of a darker hue than the stone used in the arches of Qutb-ud-din. The ornamentation too, though more geometric and abstract and therefore in greater conformity with Islamic guidelines on the plastic arts, has become laboured and less inspired. Iltutmish enlarged the courtyard of the mosque with a cloister of pillars, especially prepared for it, to the north and south.

In response to the growing Muslim population of the city, Ala-ud-din Khalji again extended the courtyard of the mosque, doubling it in size and bringing the Qutb Minar within it. He also added four gateways to the by now twice enlarged mosque, two on the east and one each on the north and south sides. The south gateway, known after him as the Alai Darwaza, is considered to be a gem of Indo-Islamic architecture. Built in 1311 it became the primary gateway, for the city lay to the south of the mosque. Essentially a domed chamber with three entrances and a fourth archway leading into what was once a portico that projected into the enclosure of the mosque, the Alai Darwaza is the first Muslim construction in India that faithfully employs the Islamic principles of architecture with their emphasis on proportion, accuracy and geometric ornamentation. Yet the insistence on sculptural patterns, both on the outside and the inside, betrays the Hindu touch and its preponderance towards covering every available inch of space with sculpture. Built of red sandstone with inscriptional bands of white marble, it is yet a marvel of inspired simplicity. The



northern double arch, one in marble, the other in red sandstone, is semi-circular. The other arches have a pointed horseshoe shape. More arches set within rectangular panels, carved screens, and alternating bands of inscriptions and floral and geometric designs add to the beauty of the façade. The exquisitely proportioned arches are for the first time in India laid out on the principle of the true arch with radiating voussoirs and squinches. The gateway is surmounted by a wide but shallow dome on an octagonal base. Ala-ud-din also attempted to build a minar to rival the Qutb, hoping to build it 'so high that it could not be exceeded', but died before even the first storey could be completed. The unfinished minar stands till today, a mass of rubble and stone.

Towering the entire complex—in fact a large part of the city—stands the enormous tower, the Qutb Minar. 'Qutb' in Arabic means pole or axis, and a minar is a free-standing

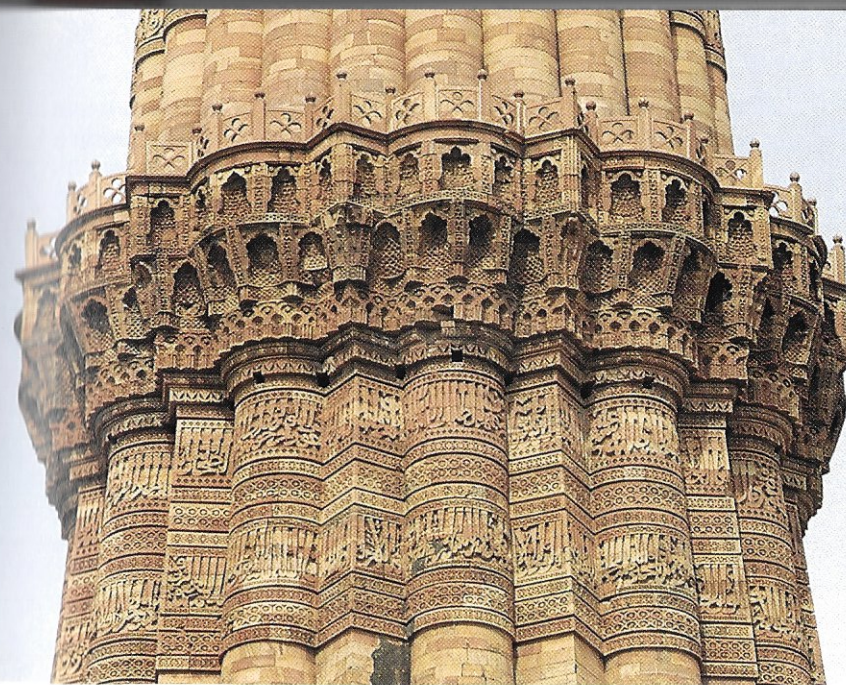
OPPOSITE *The Qutb with Col. Robert Smith's cupola in the foreground.*

BELOW *The unfinished Minar of Ala-ud-din Khalji.*



tower. The Qutb Minar could of course equally well have been named after Qutb-ud-din Aibak, the man said to have built the first storey of the tower that Ibn Batuta called 'one of the wonders of the world which has no parallel in the lands of Islam'. Whether it was built as a victory tower or as a *mazna*, a muezzin's minaret to call the faithful to prayer, there is precedence for both: such pillars of victory were quite common then and some can still be seen on the plains of Ghazni today. So also are detached minarets and early examples of these (dating to the ninth century) are found in Mesopotamia and Cairo. The sharply tapered cylindrical form too had been used in Persia, as also the fluting of the outer surface. The stalactite brackets on the projecting balconies, the hallmark of Muslim architecture in many countries, had made its appearance in the mosque of Al Aqmar at Cairo in 1125. Yet the Qutb is quite unique and one of the finest towers in existence anywhere.

There are historians who argue that the Qutb was originally a Hindu tower built by Prithviraj Chauhan as an observatory and that upon defeating him, Qutb-ud-din merely had his own name and praise—as well as those of his master Muhammad Ghorī, the ninety-nine names of Allah, and verses from the Koran—engraved upon it. They also marshal as evidence the fact that the Qutb is not built on a platform, while most Muslim monuments are, as is the Alai Minar that stands right opposite the Qutb. The Alai Minar also has its entrance facing east, like all Muslim monuments, while the entrance of the Qutb faces north. Hindu motifs and sculptures of Hindu gods and goddesses found within the Qutb as well as inscriptions in Devnagari (the Hindi script) are also cited on behalf of its Hindu origins. It is more likely, however, that like in the Quwwat-ul-Islam, Qutb-ud-din reutilized the remains of demolished Hindu temples in the Qutb Minar, and that the Hindu craftsmen employed left their mark in Devnagari. Be that as it may, the Qutb is the perfect example of a minar and at 72.5 metres the highest stone tower in India. It has a diameter of 14.40 metres at the base and 2.44 metres at the top and 319 steps



The projecting balcony of the first storey of the Qutb Minar.

leading to the top, now unfortunately closed to the public.

The Qutb was built in two, or rather three, stages. The first storey, 29 metres high, was built by Qutb-ud-din in 1199 and the next three by Iltutmish in 1230. The minar, which has often had to bear the wrath of Allah in the form of lightning, was damaged in 1322. It was repaired by Muhammad bin Tughluq and again in 1368 by Firoz Shah Tughluq. Firoz Shah converted the fourth storey into two while increasing the height somewhat. The first storey contains inscriptions bearing the names of Qutb-ud-din Aibak and his master Muhammad bin Sam or Muhammad Ghorī. The second and third storeys have bands of inscriptions bearing the name of Iltutmish. An inscription in Devnagari on the left hand abutment of the door leading to the encircling balcony in the fourth tier reads: 'The victory-pillar of the glorious monarch Ala-ud-din...'. It is probable that Ala-ud-din

Khalji carried out some structural changes in the original fourth storey and its top which perhaps was decked with a crowning *chhattri*. It would therefore be erroneous to assume, as is often done, that the marked change in the design of the fourth and fifth storeys of the Qutb is the work entirely of Firoz Shah. Moreover, on the lower part of the fourth storey, which is in red sandstone, there are records of three Sultans of Delhi: Ala-ud-din Khalji, Muhammad bin Tughluq and Firoz Shah Tughluq, and all of them are on the lower part which has a circular form. This suggests the existence of the circular design of the fourth storey even before Firoz Shah. On the entrance to the minar is an inscription of the year 1503, recording its restoration by Sikander Lodi (1489–1517), who perhaps also built the railing of the first gallery.

Built of buff and red sandstone, the first three storeys of the Qutb are each laid on a different plan. The first storey has alternating semi-circular and angular flutings, twenty-four in all. The second has only semi-circular ones and the

The tomb of Iltutmish.



third only angular, though the same alignment is carried through on all three. Projecting balconies and clusters of miniature alcoves or vaulted arches as well as bands of calligraphy, inscriptions in Arabic, help the eye along as it tries to cope with the sheer height of the minar.

The *chhattri* with which Firoz Shah Tughluq had topped the fifth storey of the Qutb fell down during an earthquake. By the early nineteenth century, when the Qutb was in dire need of repair, Colonel Robert Smith, a talented English engineer-artist carried out the work rather skilfully. However, the cupola he provided the Qutb in the 'late Mughal style' looked so incongruous, topped as it was by another wooden cupola with an ornamental flag-staff on top, 'a silly ornament like a parachute' in the words of a contemporary, that it had to be taken off in 1848. It now sits on the lawns to the south-east of the minar—a permanent reminder of the inimitability of the Qutb. The 'silly ornament' had already been destroyed in a bout of lightning.

To the north-west of the Quwwat-ul-Islam lies the tomb of Iltutmish, a square chamber with a marble cenotaph and a subterranean crypt. Built in 1235 by Iltutmish himself, it suggests that with him Islamic architecture had begun to break away from Hindu building traditions, although certain conventions died hard, such as the corbelled arches and the alcoves below the squinches. Though largely plain on the outside, the interior of the tomb is intricately and profusely carved with calligraphic, geometrical and arabesque patterns, except for the lower portions of the wall in the two west angles and portions on either side of the east door. These were perhaps meant to be covered with paintings, of which a tiny fragment can be seen in the right hand corner of the south wall. Some traces of colour can also be seen in the *mehrab*. The west wall is adorned with three niches, the central one higher and ornamented with marble. The entire structure was crowned with a shallow dome, formed by concentric rings of corbelled masonry, but the dome has now disappeared.

James Fergusson called this tomb 'one of the richest

examples of Hindu art applied to Muhammadan purposes... and certainly the richness, colour and texture of the decorations, which include certain typically Hindu motifs like the bell and chain, the lotus and vine, and wheel patterns, exhibit the exquisite beauty of a Persian carpet.

About 275 metres south-east of the Qutb lie the Jamali-Kamali Mosque and Tomb, both built in 1528–9 by Sheikh Fazlullah or Jalal Khan Jalali, a poet-saint who lived through the reigns of Sikander Lodi, Babur and Humayun, and who died in 1535–6. The mosque is in the Lodi style and is interesting in that though enclosed within a wall it consists only of a prayer hall or sanctuary, like the Qila-i-Kuhna Masjid in the Old Fort. The original gate to the mosque lies to the south. The prayer hall has five arches on the facade. The central arch, one and a half times the height of the other arches, is decorated with a spearhead fringe and is contained within a projecting frame with stone turrets at the two ends. Divided into four storeys by bold string courses, the turrets have alternating rounded and angular flutings, somewhat like the Qutb Minar, though not with the same grace and proportions. Within the main arch is contained a smaller arch with an oriel window on top of it. The arch is double-planned while the other side arches are triple-planned. Their piers have ornamental arches sunk into oblong panels. Stone medallions and ornamental bands are carved in high relief in the spandrels of all the arches. There is very little ornamentation on the inside—only some Koranic inscriptions on the central and western niches. The mosque has a high cylindrical dome topped with an open lotus. The rear corners have two octagonal towers while the rear wall has three oriel windows. Staircases at either end of the prayer hall lead to a gallery that runs round the mosque.

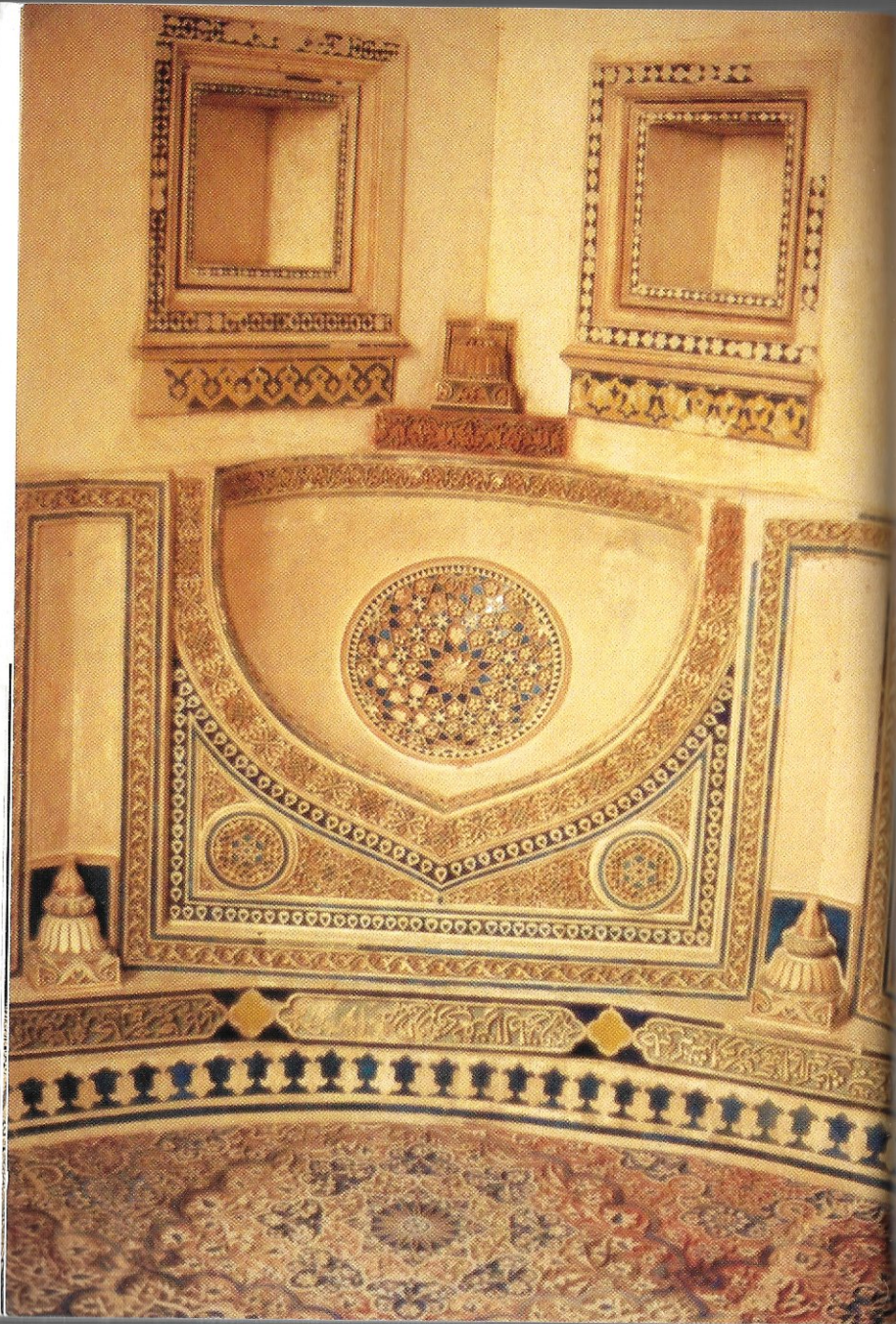
Attached to the mosque is a tomb enclosure with a tomb chamber containing two graves. It is believed that one grave is that of Sheikh Fazlullah while the other belongs to an unidentified person called Kamali. Enclosed within a wall with arched niches, open on the side facing the Qutb, closed on all others, the tomb is set in the north-western corner of



ABOVE The Jamali-Kamali Mosque.

OVERLEAF The richly decorated interior of the Jamali-Kamali Tomb.

the enclosure. The tomb itself is a square chamber with a niche in the western wall, marking the *qibla*. The east and south walls have red sandstone *jaalis*. There are eight niches above, with Jamali's verses carved in bands over them. Flat-roofed, with ceiling and walls intricately decorated with coloured tiles, and incised and painted plaster-work, this tomb is remarkably well preserved.



Tughluqabad

Standing on a rocky platform with scarped sides, sloping bastions and massive walls is one of the most impressive ruins at Delhi, Tughluqabad. This huge city-citadel-palace complex is now totally deserted and one wonders that it was ever fully inhabited. The curse of the Chishti saint Sheikh Nizam-ud-din Aulia whom Ghias-ud-din Tughluq, the founder of Tughluqabad, had offended deeply still seems to hang about the place: 'Be it the home of the lawless Gujars or lie it deserted'. However, it is the impudent red-faced monkeys rather than the lawless Gujars who seem to have the run of the place now and often one needs a great deal of self-confidence to challenge the effrontery of the bold new rulers of Tughluqabad.

The Turkish Tughluqs came to India as slaves in the service of the Khalji kings. However, Ghias-ud-din Tughluq (1320-5), who proved both brave and bright, rose quickly to become the Governor of Punjab. When the last of the Khalji kings, Mubarak Shah, who in middle age had developed a fondness for boys, was killed by his favourite, Khusro Khan (a low-caste Hindu convert to Islam), Ghias-ud-din organized a revolt, beheaded Khusro Khan and, proclaiming himself Sultan, founded the Tughluq line.

For the next hundred years under the Tughluqs, Delhi continued to be the capital of Muslim India for all practical purposes. The first three kings of the Tughluq dynasty were great builders and each founded a capital city in Delhi. Ghias-ud-din built Tughluqabad. Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq, his son, raised the fourth city of Delhi, called Jahanpanah (Refuge of the World) by enclosing within a

single wall the area between Siri (the second city of Delhi founded by Ala-ud-din Khalji in 1303, to the east of Hauz Khas), and Qila Rai Pithora. Firoz Shah, the third ruler, besides restoring and building several structures in and around Delhi, raised Firozabad, the fifth city of Delhi.

Built of quartzite and lime-mortar, with thick walls, numerous gates and bastions (fifty-two and fifty-six respectively, according to one contemporary account) protected on three sides by a moat and on the fourth by an artificial lake and with a perimeter of 6.5 kilometres, Tughluqabad was built at great speed—within two years according to some historians. The palace, fortress and city were built as a composite whole though nothing much except the ramparts survive today. The citadel lay to the east of the present entrance, surrounded by high walls and bastions. On the west, also bounded by rubble walls and bastions, were the palaces. The city lay to the north, enclosed by massive gates. With some effort the ruins of several large buildings can be traced, among them a mosque, a tower and a tunnelled market with rows of cubicles scooped out of the walls. There are several underground chambers with no entrance or exit to them except a large round opening at the top. It is difficult to say what these were meant for: granary or dungeon. (A similar chamber exists in the mausoleum of Ghias-ud-din Tughluq.) Numerous tanks and wells dot the area. To the south of Tughluqabad lies the small fortress of Adilabad built by Muhammad bin Tughluq (1325–51), Ghias-ud-din's son and successor. Near the embankment connecting Tughluqabad with Adilabad are sluice gates through which water was channelized to irrigate the fields below.

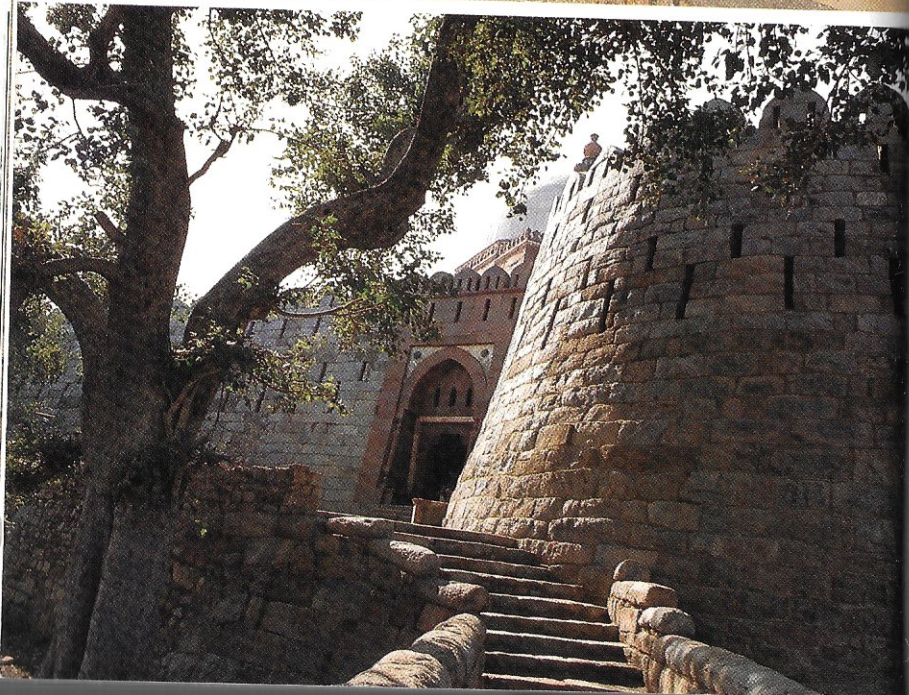
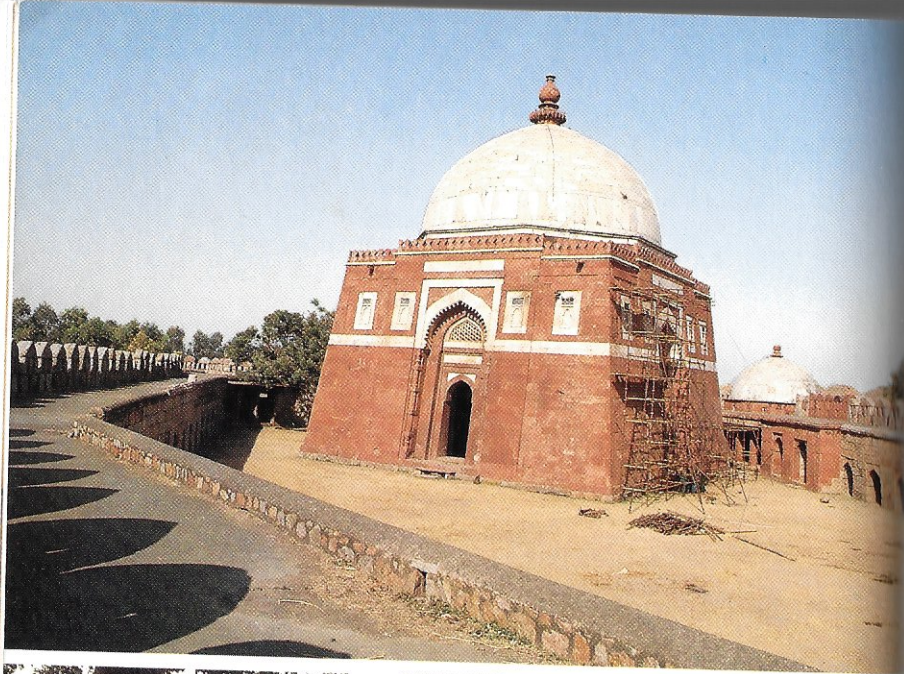
Across the road and facing the fort is the mausoleum that Ghias-ud-din built for himself in 1325. Originally it stood within a vast reservoir and was connected to the fort of Tughluqabad by a viaduct nearly 550 metres long on twenty-seven arches. The fortress-like mausoleum with a well, a storage chamber for food and numerous underground apartments could easily be put into a state of defence when necessary. Surrounded by battlemented walls fortified at



Ruins of the tunnelled market in the Tughluqabad Fort.

the angles by bastions surmounted by cupolas, it is 'a picture of a warrior's tomb, unrivalled anywhere and a singular contrast with the elegant and luxuriant garden tombs of the more settled and peaceful dynasties that succeeded'.

The main mausoleum contains the remains of Ghias-ud-din, his wife and son Muhammad. A domed chamber on the tower near the entrance houses two more tombs. An inscription over the southern entrance refers to this chamber as *Darul-aman* (Abode of Peace) and declares that one Zafar Khan lies buried within. Zafar Khan was the title that Ghias-ud-din had bestowed on one of his sons and this could well be his tomb with his wife interred beside him. This tomb was built before Ghias-ud-din decided to site his own mausoleum at this place. To the left of the main mausoleum lies another tiny grave, perhaps that of a child, though legend



ascribes it to Ghias-ud-din's favourite dog. Against the enclosure walls are pillared corridors with typically Hindu bracket and lintel openings which stand out in sharp contrast to the rest of the building.

One of the most controversial personalities in Indian history, Muhammad bin Tughluq was in many ways an extraordinary man, far ahead of his times. Well-versed in practically all branches of medieval learning, he was yet a tyrant and a despot and stories of his cruelty had great currency among the people. He was the first in India to introduce token currency, made great improvements in the design and calligraphy of coins and the execution of dies, and was the first to introduce what is called the 'decimal in the date' system.

Though it has never been proved quite conclusively, it is popularly believed that Sultan Muhammad inherited his throne through parricide. He had erected a wooden pavilion about five kilometres outside Delhi to welcome his father returning home from a military expedition and also so that he could enter Delhi at an auspicious hour. After an elaborate and sumptuous meal, as horses and elephants were paraded before Ghias-ud-din Tughluq, a sudden thunder storm, quite common to Delhi in the summer months, uprooted the pavilion which collapsed upon him, killing him. Many suspect that the pavilion was deliberately so constructed that the parading of the elephants would be enough to dislodge it. It is also widely believed that the curse of Sheikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya also hastened the Sultan's untimely end. To the Sultan's order that the Sheikh go away from Delhi before his return from his campaign, the Sheikh had replied enigmatically '*Hanuz Dilli dur ast*' ('It is a long way to Delhi') and indeed Delhi was to prove too far for Ghias-ud-din for he never did get back alive.

The kingdom that Muhammad inherited was so large and the means of communication then available so meagre that the authority of a centralized power at Delhi could hardly be maintained effectively over so vast an area. Seeking a more centrally situated capital, Muhammad was forced to create

Ghias-ud-din's Tomb ABOVE, and BELOW its fortified exterior.

one at Devagiri (or Daulatabad, as he christened it) in the Deccan, which he had only recently annexed. Not content with merely shifting the court, he insisted on moving the nobility, the elite and the Sufis (Muslim mystics), for he also wanted to establish Muslim culture in the predominantly Hindu Deccan. In spite of the elaborate facilities that the Sultan offered the travellers en route and on arrival at Daulatabad, the people of Delhi left with a heavy heart: 'they walked with loud lamentations, like persons who were going to be buried alive'. Within a year the Sultan realized that the shifting of his capital had not been a success and moved the entire population back.

Though much smaller in size than Tughluqabad, Adilabad is built on the same lines and in the same architectural style. The walls are massive and in three tiers in the upper part, as at Tughluqabad. On the interior there are continuous wall arcades, providing posts for guards. The two gates of the fort, one with barbicans between bastions, survive. To the south-west lies the citadel, separated from the rest of the fort by a defensive wall.

With the Tughluqs, Muslim architecture in Delhi underwent a marked change. The simplicity of line in their buildings, the reduction of ornamentation to the barest minimum and the use of large stone blocks, plain rather than the rich red of the Khaljis, all contribute to an effect of strength and austerity, particularly after the profusion of ornamentation in the constructions that precede theirs. The buildings of the Tughluqs are pure architecture devoid of any attempt at sculpture. Yet, while the earlier Muslim dynasties had striven to break away from Hindu features as far as possible, the Tughluqs willingly incorporated them into their buildings, forging in the process a truly Indian style of architecture. Their arches are pointed and true but are reinforced at the base by bracketed lintels—functionally unnecessary but structurally important for the Hindu masons who must have constructed them. The single domes of white marble that surmount the two tomb chambers too, are crowned by ribbed finials of a fruit and water-pot motif, traditional



Ruins of the Tughluqabad Fort.

Hindu symbols of fertility and good fortune. Yet the walls of the mausoleum slope rapidly inwards, much in the manner of the Egyptians. The square pillar and the lotus ornament are happily used, not unwillingly tolerated. It is this which lends a special charm to the perfectly proportioned Tughluq buildings, in spite of their overpowering cyclopean quality.

Kotla Firoz Shah

Muhammad bin Tughluq left behind no male heir. He was succeeded by his cousin Firoz Shah (1351–88) whom Muhammad had brought up as his son. Firoz managed to bring a measure of peace to a disaffected people. Though neither brave nor brilliant like his predecessors, he performed a feat probably unmatched by any other medieval monarch: he managed to govern for thirty-seven long years without recourse to bloodshed or torture. His reign is devoid of any notable military achievements. His genius lay in promulgating civil reforms and streamlining administration, though his reign is also the greatest age of corruption in the entire history of medieval India.

Firoz Shah's capacity for construction was prodigious. According to one estimate he built 50 canals and water courses, 40 mosques, 30 colleges, 100 palaces, 200 inns, 150 bridges and laid out 1200 gardens and 30 towns, besides conducting extensive repairs to existing buildings. Says Firoz Shah in the *Futuh-i-Firoz Shahi*, a compilation of his administrative ordinances:

One of god's favours to me has been the fact that I have been able to repair and renew the buildings of past Kings and great amirs and I have given this repair-work precedence over my own constructions.

He repaired and redecored the tombs of his 'masters' Ghiyas-ud-din and Muhammad bin Tughluq; he added two storeys to the Qutb Minar ('It had been struck by lightning. It was made better than it had been before and also raised higher'). He had the Shamshi and the Alai tanks cleaned up. If we believe all that Firoz Shah says, he would be one of the

greatest builders of medieval India, though most of the structures he put up were of rubble and bespeak the decline in the fortunes of king and country.

Today Firoz Shah is remembered chiefly for the city he founded on the right bank of the Yamuna in 1354, Firozabad, the fifth city of Delhi. Firozabad contained a palace (Kushk-i-Firoz) and citadel (Kotla Firoz Shah) and, according to a contemporary account, stretched from Hauz Khas in the south to the Asokan Pillar and the Kushk-i-Shikar or hunting lodge he had on the northern Ridge. The same authority also states that the city contained 8 Jama Masjids, each of which could accommodate a Friday congregation of about 10,000; 3 palaces and 120 inns. As it was the custom to allow visitors three days free board and lodging at an inn, wags remarked that it was possible to live in Firozabad free of cost all the year round by simply changing residence.

Firozabad is now only a pile of crumbling brick and stone. Much of it was pillaged when Shahjahanabad was being built, in 1639. Only the ruins of a mosque, bits of the palace walls,

The Ashokan pillar atop Kotla Firoz Shah.





Ruins of the mosque at Firozabad.

Asoka's pillar and a circular *baoli* or stepped well, and a range of subterranean apartments survive. The mosque on which Firoz had his ordinances carved on eight stone slabs fixed on an octagonal drum is now without a roof. Timur, when he invaded India, had his *khutba* (sermon) read in this mosque in 1398. It is also said that he was so impressed with the plan of this mosque that he had a similar one built in Samarkand employing artisans he had taken back with him from India. Built on a series of cells, the mosque at Firozabad most certainly had colonnades or cloisters along the inside wall, though these have now disappeared. The main entrance is in the north wall rather than in the east, as was customary. The remains of many other unidentified buildings can be seen on either side of the mosque. A tower with holes for pigeons can be seen to the south, though it has become difficult to trace out the palace.

Firoz also brought two Asokan pillars of polished stone to

Delhi. Asoka, the great Mauryan emperor (c.300 BC) whose kingdom spanned almost the entire subcontinent, abjured violence after winning a particularly bloody battle. It was he who was responsible for the spread of Buddhism, the new religion that had only recently sprung up in India. He had his proclamations engraved on rocks and pillars scattered throughout his kingdom. Firoz Shah found two such pillars, one at Topra near Ambala and the other near Meerut. Intrigued and fascinated by them, he had them transported to his capital with great care and at great cost. He installed one pillar within a stone railing in a commanding position in his newly built citadel, Kotla Firoz Shah, and the other near his hunting lodge on the northern Ridge.

Neither Firoz nor the learned men of his day could decipher the edicts on the Asokan pillars, for knowledge of the Brahmi script in which they are inscribed had been lost. It was not until 1837 that the orientalist James Prinsep could decode it. The pillar at Firozabad was the first to be deciphered. It contains four inscriptions of Asoka, some of the oldest existing records in India. There are also two other inscriptions, one above and one below the Asokan edicts, in a much more modern script, of the Chauhan Prince Visala Deva, dated 1164. A tapering column of polished sandstone, it is 30.5 metres in height with 1.47 metres buried beneath. It weighs 27 tons, is 64.26 centimetres wide at the top and 97.28 centimetres at the base. The sandstone was so well polished that many famous travellers, including Tom Coryat and Bishop Reginald Heber, took it to be made of brass, while Firoz himself called it 'the golden pillar'.

The glories of Firozabad were not to last. Within ten years of Firoz Shah's death the town was almost totally destroyed. Shams Siraj Afif, a contemporary, laments: 'A city so great, so populous and so prosperous has, in accordance with Divine destiny, been ruined. . . .' Firoz himself lies buried in a modest tomb at Hauz Khas with his son and grandson beside him.

OVERLEAF *Detail of the inscription on the Ashokan pillar at Firozabad*



Lodi Gardens

After the death of Firoz Shah in 1388, the Tughluqs declined rapidly. They were succeeded by the Afghan Sayyids, who after a short spell gave way to the Lodis, also Afghans. After centuries of rivalry with rulers of Turkish descent, the Afghans enjoyed a period of brief supremacy with the Sayyids (1414–51), the Lodis (1451–1526) and the Surs (1540–55), before being totally extinguished. This period was one of anarchy and turmoil and is remembered chiefly for the defeat of the Lodis by Babur (1526) who was to found the illustrious Mughal dynasty in India.

The Sayyids and the Lodis did not distinguish themselves in any particular field and their rule is devoid of any advances in polity, art or culture. The empire of Delhi shrank to the confines of the city and a few meagre villages around. Their buildings, like those of the Tughluqs, are built with poor materials, but there is further development in design and a greater fusion of Hindu and Muslim elements in their architecture. Their domes are fuller and are now placed on a drum to give them height. With Sikander Lodi (1489–1517) the capital shifted to Agra, a city he founded on the banks of the river Yamuna, 200 kilometres downstream. Interestingly, the Lodis brought their dead back to Delhi, unlike the Surs who buried theirs away from it. Sayyid and Lodi tombs litter what were once outlying areas of Delhi. The Lodi Gardens, the area around which the Lodis had their seat, has some of the best preserved Sayyid and Lodi monuments.

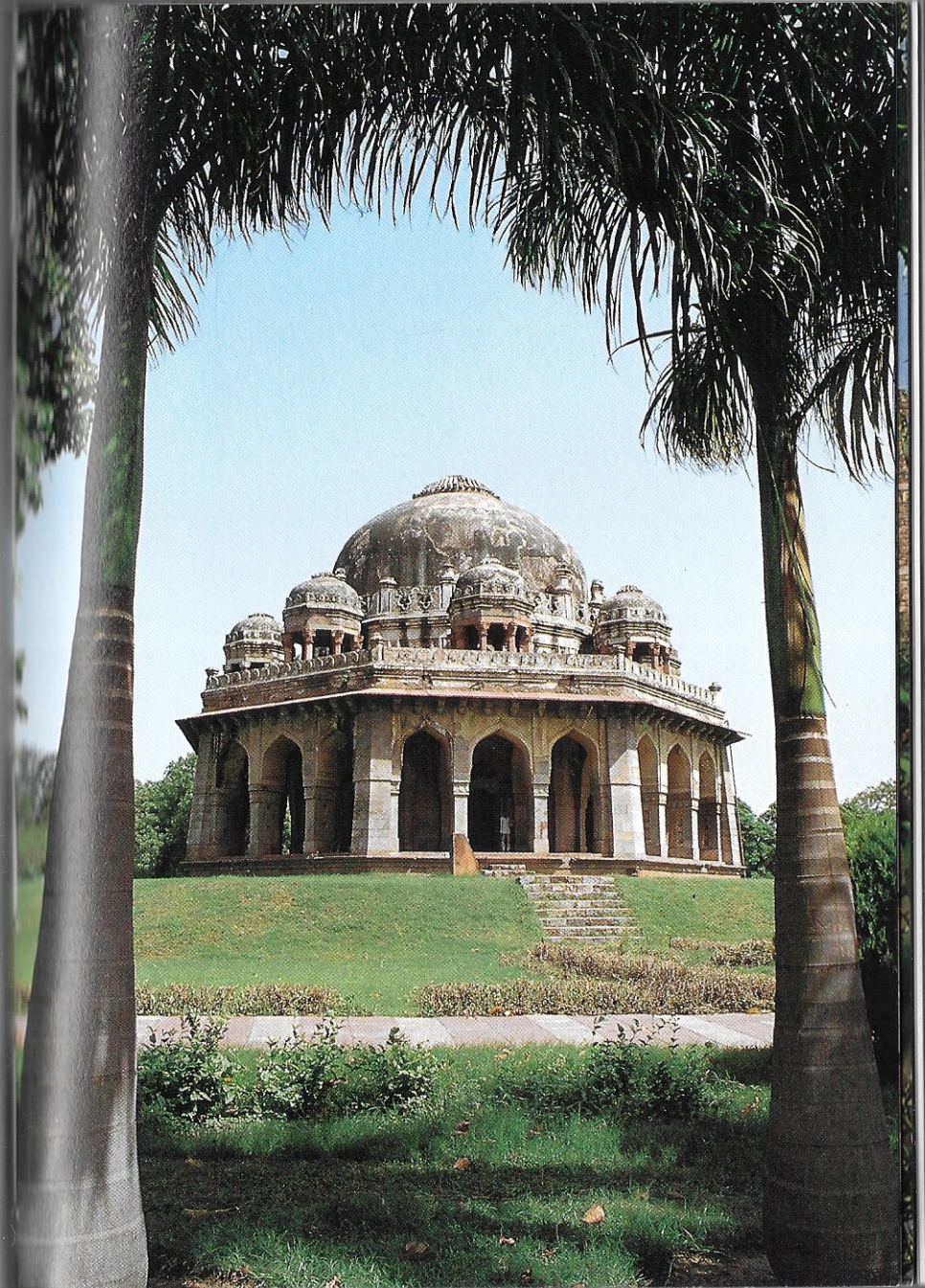
The Lodi Gardens, originally called Lady Willingdon Park, is a landscaped garden in the English style. It has a Sayyid tomb, that of Muhammad Shah (1434–44) and three Lodi tombs, of which only Sikander Lodi's is identifiable.

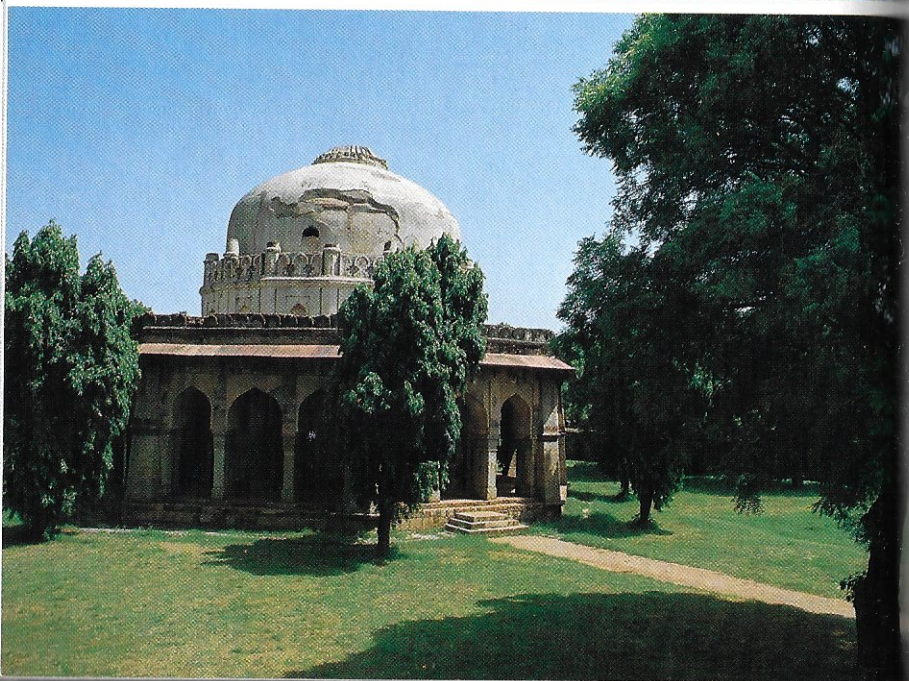
The tombs of Muhammad Shah and Sikander Lodi are octagonal in shape, a departure from the earlier square tombs of the Slave kings, the Khaljis and the Tughluqs.

The octagonal tomb had a long and respectable ancestry in Islamic countries, going back to the middle of the seventh century when the Dome of the Rock and the Mosque of Omar were built in Jerusalem. In India, however, most early tombs were square. The first octagonal tomb was built by Ghias-ud-din Tughluq for himself in Multan (now in Pakistan) when he was still the Governor of Punjab under the Khaljis. After he declared himself Sultan he gifted away this tomb to Sheikh Rukn-ud-din Multani, a Sufi mystic whom he venerated highly. Later he abandoned the octagonal pattern and built himself a square fortress-like tomb at Tughluqabad. The first octagonal tomb in Delhi was built by Khan-i-Jahan Tilangani, the *wazir* of Firoz Shah, in the last days of Tughluq rule. The octagonal tomb was usually built on a plinth and consisted of a domed square or octagonal chamber enclosed by a verandah with three arched openings on each of its eight sides. Situated in Nizam-ud-din, the tomb of Khan-i-Jahan Tilangani is now in a rather decrepit state. In 1434, when a tomb was being built in Kotla Mubarakpur for the second Sayyid ruler Mubarak Shah (1421–34), Khan-i-Jahan Tilangani's tomb formed the prototype. This was further refined and enlarged in the tomb built for the third Sayyid ruler, Muhammad Shah.

Situated in the Lodi Gardens, the tomb of Muhammad Shah is typical of the octagonal pattern. The central chamber, also octagonal, is enclosed by a verandah. There are three arched openings in each of the eight sides of the verandah, protected above by a wide *chhajja* supported on massive stone brackets. In the middle of each side of the verandah there is a spherical soffit in the shape of a flower, with ornamental stalactites and transverse arches on the sides. The entrance to the inner chamber is through beam and lintel doorways which have beautifully carved stonework shafts on the pilasters. The interior of the dome has incised plaster-work in the centre and

OPPOSITE *The tomb of Muhammad Shah.*





arabesque and calligraphic designs on the perimeter. The doorways of the inner chamber as well as the openings of the verandah were originally sealed with carved screens. The western side was later walled, so as to serve as a mosque. The mortuary chamber contains eight graves, of which the central one is that of Muhammad Shah. The structure is topped with a massive dome on a sixteen-sided drum. It has numerous pinnacles around it and eight octagonal *chhattris*, one over each side of the octagon to hide the drum. The domes of the *chhattris* echo the shape and outline of the central dome, all of which are crowned with open lotuses, though the finials are missing. An interesting detail is the use of the sloping buttresses that strengthen each angle of the octagonal tomb. They add considerably to the aesthetic design of the tomb, giving it a pyramidal touch.

The tomb of Sikander Lodi, built in 1518 by his son Irbahim, is an almost exact copy of the tomb of Muhammad Shah. Also octagonal with a verandah running round it, the tomb has three arched openings on each side and the angles are supported by sloping buttresses. It was decorated with enamelled tiles in various colours, some of which still survive. The tomb is made of grey stone which was originally coated with a thin layer of plaster. A few medallions with incised designs survive, as does the plaster-work on the ceilings. The *chhattris* over the roof have disappeared.

Sikander Lodi's tomb is significant in that it is set in a large square garden enclosed within high walls. The garden-tomb concept was later to be used with great finesse by the Mughals. In Sikander Lodi's tomb it is still embryonic. The surrounding walls are arcaded with massive gateways in the middle of each wall, except the western one which marks the *qibla*. The southern gateway is the most elaborate, with outwork and a large platform.

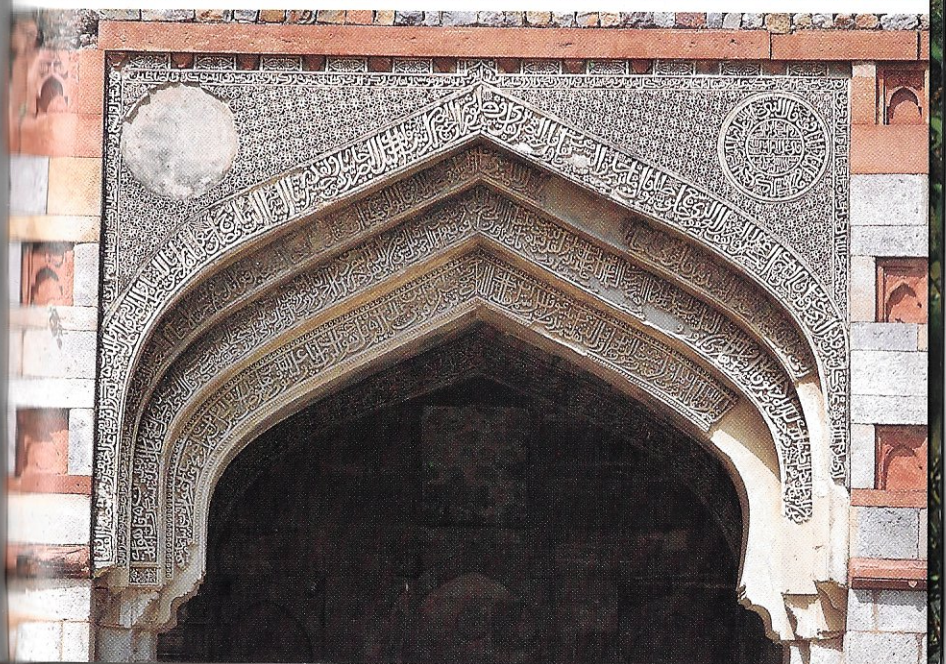
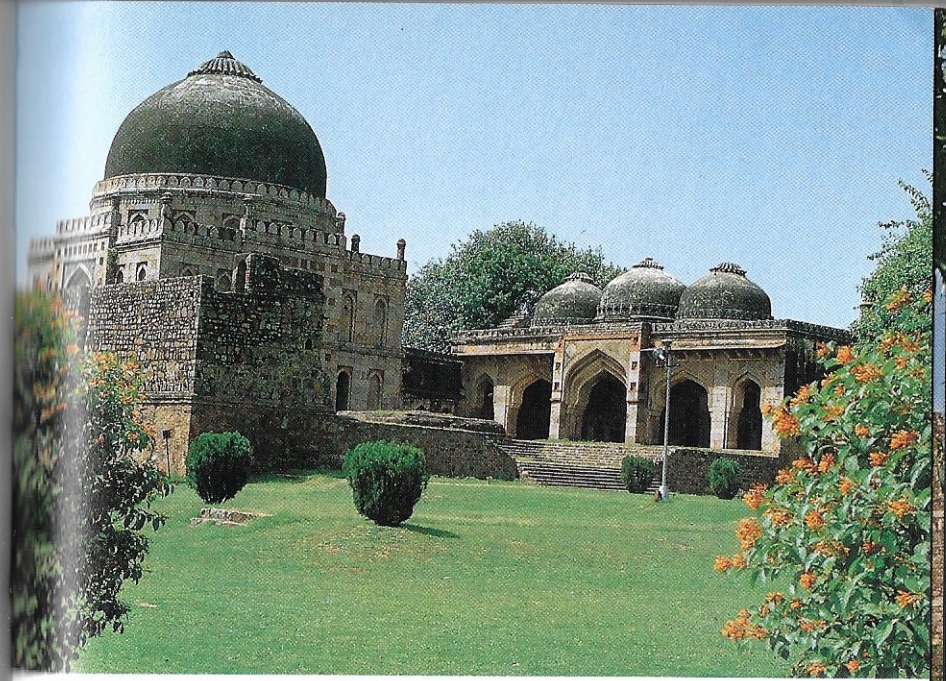
The two other structures within the Lodi Gardens, the Bara Gumbad and the Sheesh Gumbad, are situated within a stone's throw of each other. The Bara Gumbad (Big Dome)

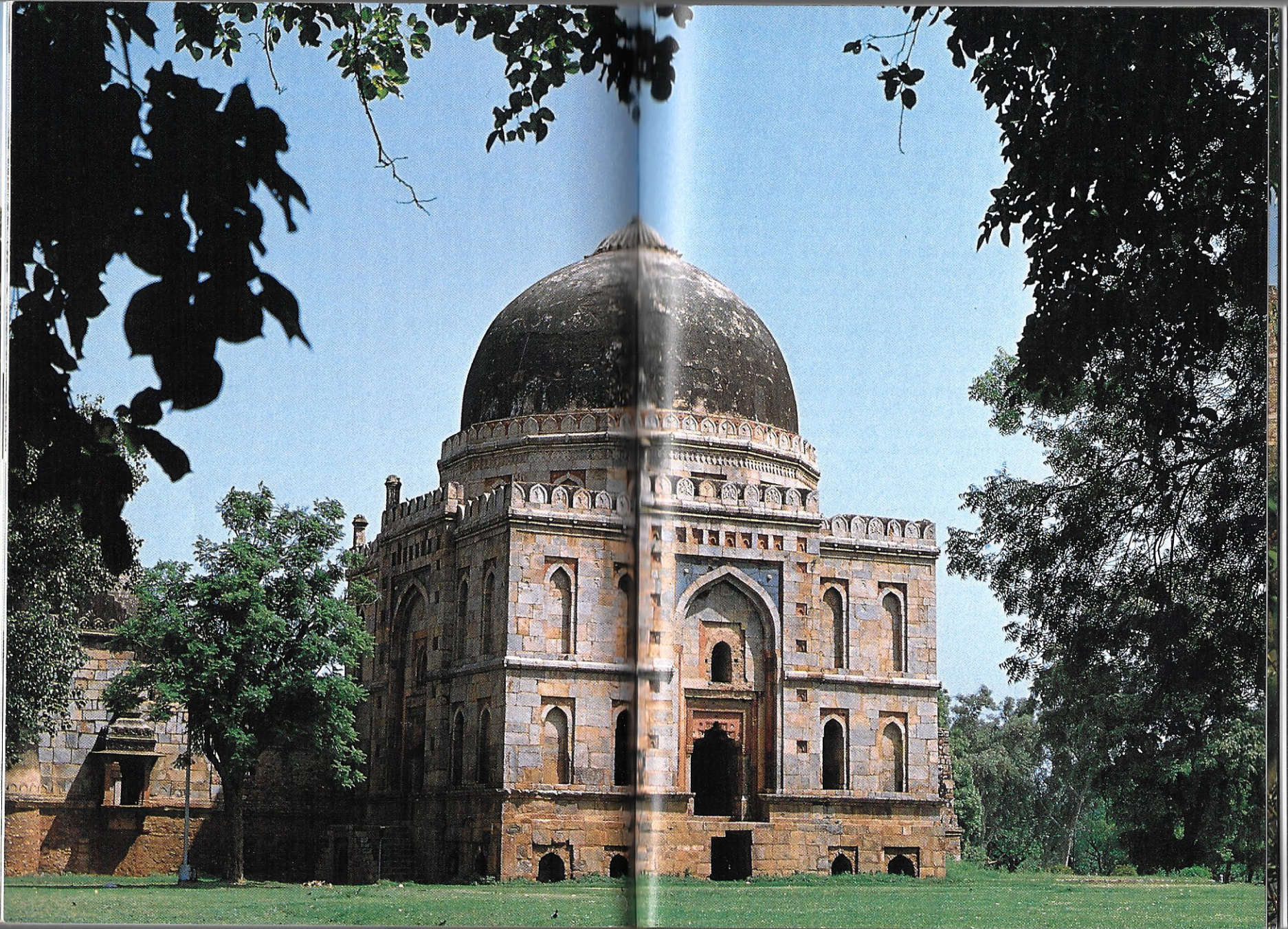
OPPOSITE ABOVE *The decorated ceiling of Muhammad Shah's Tomb, and BELOW Sikander Lodi's Tomb.*

is so called because it is the first full dome in Delhi and forms a complete hemisphere. It is a large gateway-like structure, somewhat like the Alai Darwaza at the Qutb. Attached to a mosque on its west, like the Alai Darwaza, it has similar dimensions with a similar stone bench running round the internal walls and similar miniature brackets at the angles of the octagon. Both are built on a high plinth, but while the Alai Darwaza is richly carved the Bara Gumbad is plain on the inside and the outside. The exterior creates the illusion of being double-storeyed by providing a double row of arches on the facade, much as the Alai Darwaza does. However, recent scholarship is quite emphatic that the Bara Gumbad is not merely a gateway but a Lodi tomb in the square style, though the structure contains no grave today. Its being open on all four sides creates some confusion for ordinarily the west side should have been sealed and a *mehrab* provided in it. But then practically all the other tombs in the Lodi Gardens had their west sides walled much later, as even a cursory examination will reveal. Perhaps the tomb belonged to a Lodi nobleman hostile to Sikander Lodi, who may have had the grave removed and a mosque built alongside. The mosque is a later construction and in a style very different from that of the Bara Gumbad.

A set of double steps is provided on the western side. The interior is decorated with stucco work and painting while buff stone predominates on the outside with touches of red and black. Bracket and lintel doorways are set within the larger arches of the openings and have beautifully carved inscriptions on the red stone lintels. A tombstone set in an alcove beneath the staircase suggests that the Bara Gumbad was originally a tomb. An imposing high dome with a clear-cut line, not obscured by *chhattris* or pinnacles, surmounts the structure. It is topped with the open lotus flower common to all buildings of this period.

OPPOSITE ABOVE *The Bara Gumbad and its mosque*, and BELOW *the plaster-work on its façade*. OVERLEAF *The Bara Gumbad*.





The mosque adjoining the Bara Gumbad was constructed in 1484, according to an inscription over the southern *mehrab* in the prayer hall. Built of grey ashlar, it has a prayer hall to the west and a Mehman Khana or guest house opposite it, built much later. The front of the prayer hall has five arched openings profusely decorated with foliage and Koranic inscriptions in incised and painted plaster. A *chhajja* overhead protects the arches. The three central bays are surmounted by low domes while the two end bays are flat-roofed and have oriel windows at the sides. An oriel window also projects from the centre of the back of the western wall behind the *mehrab*. The rear corners on the side of the prayer hall have tapering minarets attached to them. These seem to be in the Tughluq style, though they also anticipate the octagonal towers of the early Mughal and Sur periods. According to one tradition the raised platform in the centre of the courtyard contains the grave of the builder, while according to another it contained a tank for ritual ablutions before prayer.

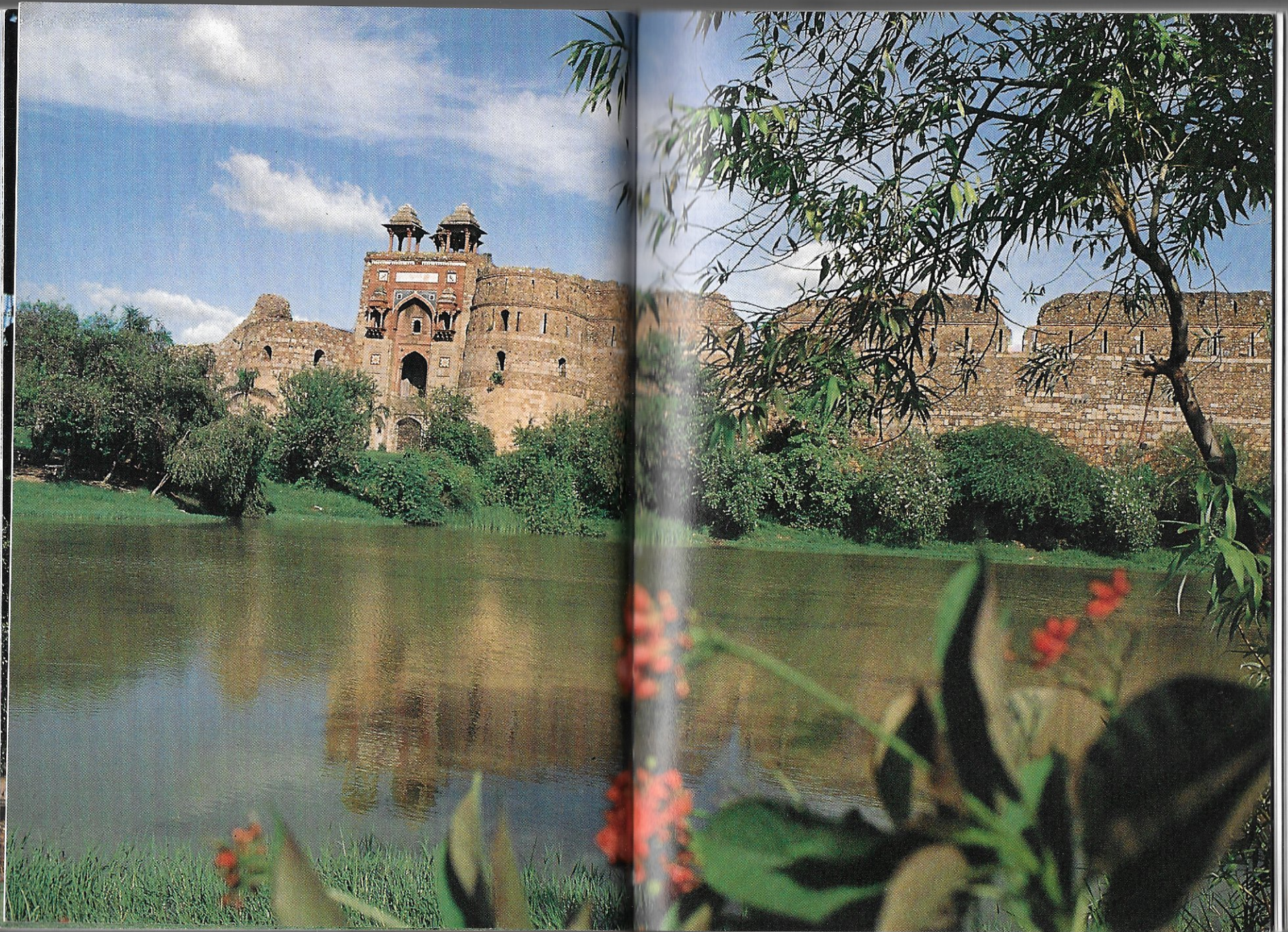
North of the Bara Gumbad lies the Sheesh Gumbad (Glazed Dome), so called because of the profuse tile work on its exterior, now unfortunately defaced. Similar in style to the Bara Gumbad, it is a square tomb with the customary double row of arches on the exterior making it out to be a double-storeyed structure from the outside while from the inside it is single storeyed. Bold projecting cornices on the exterior and a projecting frame for the central arch divide it neatly into sections. The central frieze has square panels decorated with glazed tiles in many colours, turquoise blue being most prominent. Inside, the western wall is provided with a *mehrab*, turning the tomb into a mosque when required. The ceiling is decorated with incised plaster-work with floral and calligraphic patterns. The graves within are unidentifiable, though they must be of Lodi noblemen for the tomb was built during Sikander Lodi's reign.

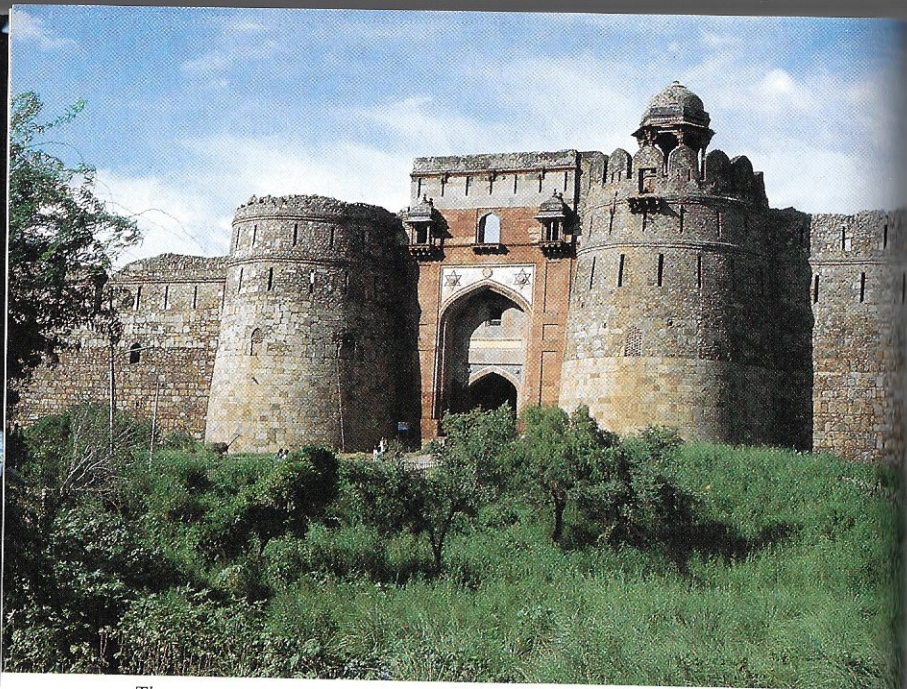
To the east of Sikander's tomb stands a bridge with eight piers known as Athipula. Built during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556–1605), it is one of several such bridges that dot the city.

Purana Qila

The Purana Qila is built on the site of the most ancient of the numerous 'cities' of Delhi, Indraprastha or Indrapat, mentioned in the ancient Indian epic the *Mahabharata*. Little remains of it today, or of the subsequent settlements that came up on this site, except what is dug up by the Archaeological Survey of India. Continuing excavations on the south-eastern side of the Purana Qila have thrown up Painted Grey Ware (associated with the *Mahabharata* c.900 BC), Polished Black Ware (Maurya period c.300 BC) and Plain Red Pottery (Sunga period c.200–100 BC) as well as copper and gold coins, figurines and pieces of stone sculpture from later dates. All this goes to establish beyond doubt that the site has been continually populated for the last 3000 years.

The citadel which stands there today, however, belongs to a much later date. In 1533 Humayun, the second of the Great Mughals, decided to build a new city there. It was to be called Dinpanah or the Asylum of Faith. In sharp contrast to the bigotry and persecution rampant in practically all other Muslim states of the world, Humayun, a cultured and liberal man, intended peopling his city with poets and philosophers of all sects and persuasion. However, he had little opportunity to realize his dreams, either those of founding a new city or of gathering a glittering court, for within ten years of his accession he had been defeated and forced to flee to Persia by an upstart Afghan chieftain, Sher Shah Sur. All that remains today of Humayun's Dinpanah at Delhi are the high walls and imposing gateways of the citadel, now known as the Purana Qila or the Old Fort. Ironically, the only two buildings still





The western gateway to the Purana Qila.

standing within those walls, the Sher Mandal and the Qila-i-Kuhna Mosque, are the work of the man who was once his subject but who eventually elbowed him out of his empire.

Humayun's contribution to the fort, however, is no mean achievement. The citadel, roughly rectangular in shape, has a circuit of nearly two kilometres. Unlike the earlier fortified palaces of Delhi, the Dinpanah does not bristle with bastions. Only the western wall is provided with them, besides the corners of the walls, for at one time all other sides were surrounded by water: the Yamuna on the east and moats fed by it on the north and south. The walls themselves are thick, with cells running in two-bay depth on the inside. The gateways, three in number, have bastions on either side and were originally approached by drawbridges. The northern gateway called the Talaqui Darwaza or the Forbidden Gateway, combines the typically Islamic pointed arch with

the very Hindu *chhatris* and brackets. The simplified representation of the solar orb, the symbol of the sun-descended Shahs of Persia—with whom the Mughals loved to compare themselves—is balanced by a panel in half-relief of a man in combat with a leogryph. The southern gateway, called the Humayun Darwaza, had a similar panel with elephants instead—again a typically Hindu symbol.

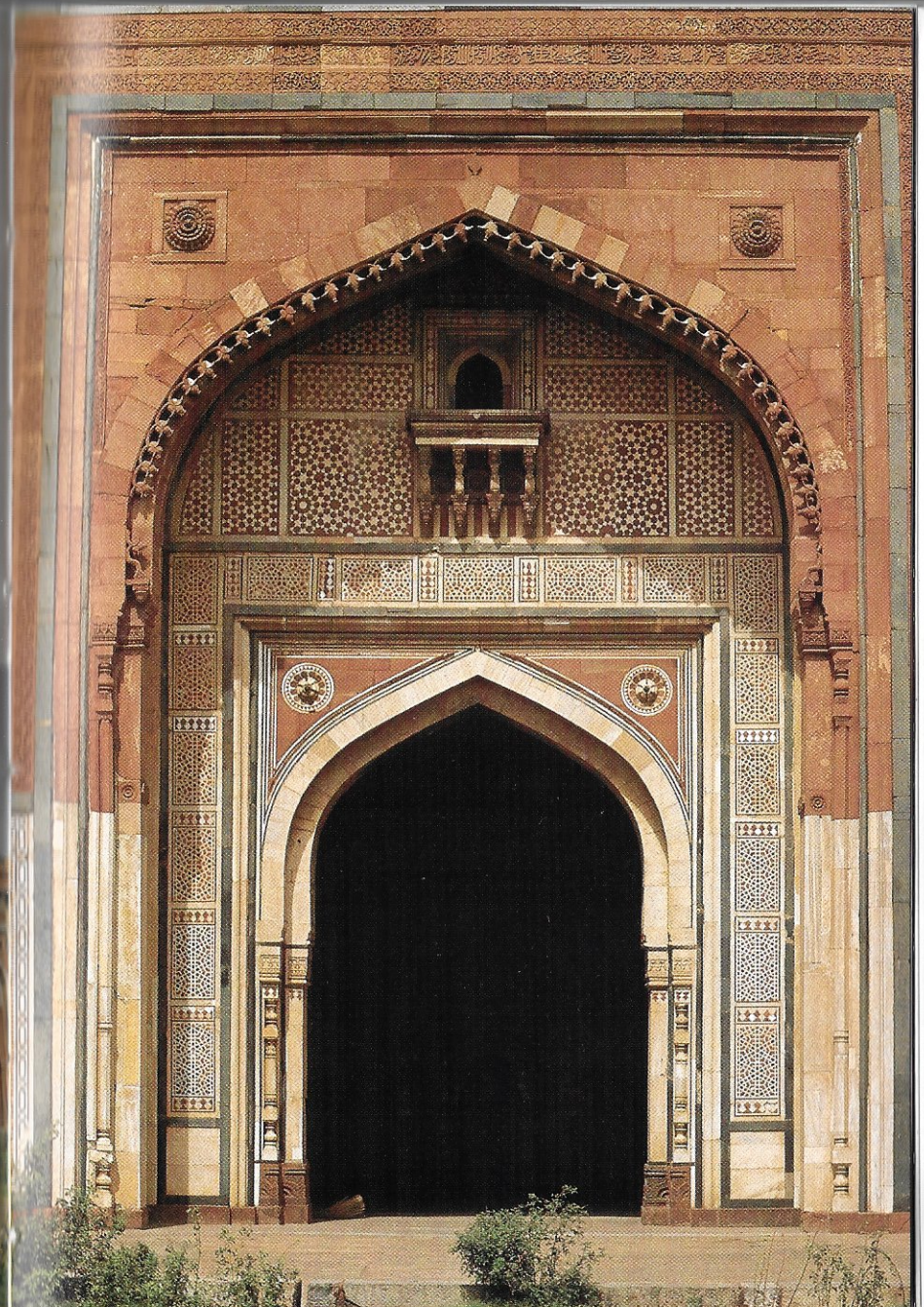
Sher Shah, in many ways the very opposite of Humayun, earned the title of 'Sher Khan' because he had killed a tiger with a single stroke of the sword. He assumed the title of Sher Shah—Tiger King—claiming imperial status just before he defeated Humayun. A man of great courage and immense resourcefulness, he was also an inspired administrator. During his brief reign of five years as emperor, Sher Shah set up a highly effective system of provincial government and revenue collection on which Akbar, Humayun's son and successor and the greatest of the Mughals, was to build an enduring administrative edifice (which was in turn taken over practically wholesale by the British). Sher Shah also built numerous highways with regular caravan serais, some of which are still in use today. The Grand Trunk road, which ran all the way from Dhaka (now in Bangladesh) through Agra and Delhi up to Lahore (now in Pakistan) is one such.

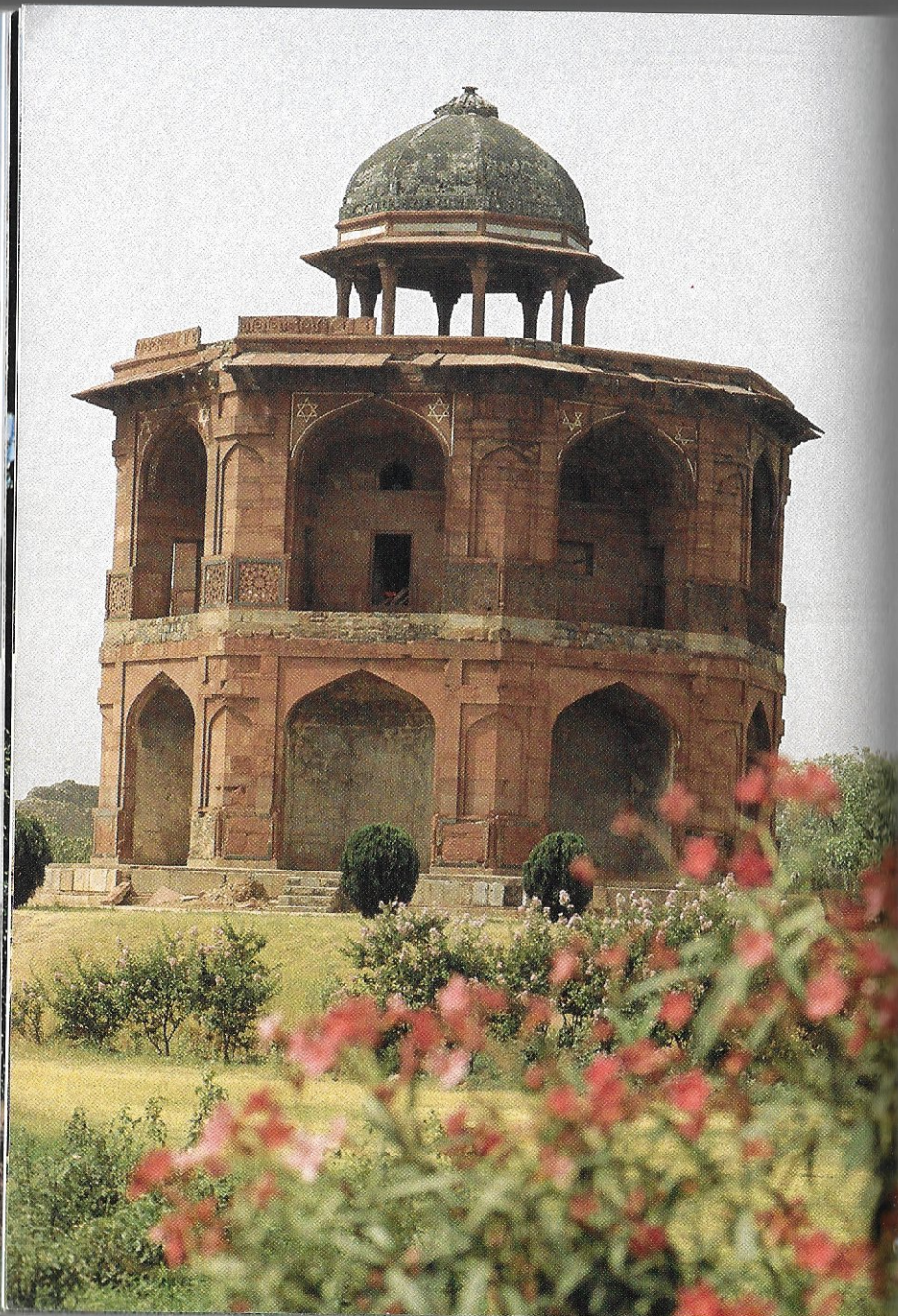
Sher Shah appropriated the Dinpanah and renamed it Sher Garh. He also built an elegant mosque within it called the Masjid Qila-i-Kuhna (Mosque of the Old Fort) which is a further refinement of the Lodi style of mosque building. It is finely proportioned and successfully blends a variety of different coloured stones to form a pleasing colour scheme. The Hindu and Islamic features too are fused together in perfect harmony so that they no longer stand out unless one specifically looks for them. This mosque also occupies an important place in the tradition of mosque building in India, marking the transition from the pre-Lodi to the later, grander style of the Mughals.

Not by any means a large mosque—its prayer hall measures just 51.20 metres by 14.90 metres—its façade is still quite the

most striking bit of coloured decoration at Delhi'. It is divided into five arched bays with open archways recessed into them, topped by small oriel windows. The central arch is higher than the others and framed within a projection flanked by narrow fluted pilasters. In the arches at the ends, plain grey stone is used instead of red stone. The variety of materials employed too adds considerably to the charm of the building—the central arch is of marble, the spandrels of red sandstone studded with marble bosses, the columns and pilasters of black and white marble and the end arches of grey stone. At the rear corners are five double-storeyed stair-turrets with oriel windows on brackets. The interior of the mosque too is very graceful with archways dividing it into compartments and richly decorated *mehrab*s recessed into the western wall. From both ends staircases lead to a narrow passage on the second storey running right round the hall. The roof of the mosque was once surmounted by three domes but only the central one remains. In the court in front of the mosque there probably existed a shallow tank and a fountain.

BELOW *The Qila-i-Kuhna Masjid, and OPPOSITE its central arch.*





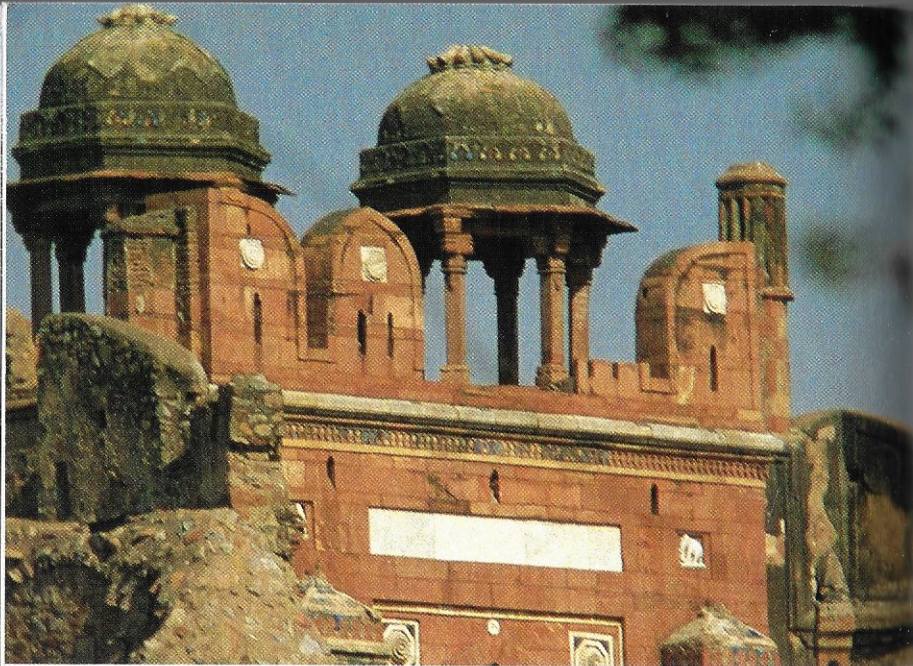
However, it is the Sher Mandal (quite likely a corruption of Sher Manzil, or the Tower of Sher Shah) which is of greater historical significance. In the game of musical chairs which the throne of Delhi seems to have become around this time, Humayun had managed to oust the descendants of Sher Shah and repossess Dinpanah/Sher Garh by 1555.

The Sher Mandal, which Sher Shah had most probably used as a pleasure resort, was fitted up by Humayun as a library to house his valuable collection of manuscripts. It was in this same building that the young Akbar was given lessons in drawing by Mir Sayyid Ali, one of the two famous Persian painters that Humayun had brought back with him from his wanderings abroad. It was under the tutelage of these two Persian painters that Indian artists established what came to be known as the Mughal school of art, which reached its peak under Jahangir, Humayun's grandson.

It is quite probable that Humayun, who was a keen astrologer as well as an inordinately superstitious man even by the standards of his own time, also used the Sher Mandal as an observatory for there is an open pavilion on its roof. On Friday, 24 January 1556, he waited for Venus to rise, for he intended holding a propitious assembly at the precise moment and making important appointments. He came out on the roof of the library and blessed the people assembled at the nearby mosque. As the evening advanced he wished to descend but as he came to the second step the muezzin raised an untimely call to prayer. As he tried to bow, his foot caught in his robe and he fell headlong down the steps, receiving a mortal blow. Three days later Humayun was dead. 'His end was of a piece with his character. If there was a possibility of falling Humayun was not the man to miss it. He tumbled through life and he tumbled out of it' remarks an unkindly historian.

The Sher Mandal is an octagonal tower, two storeys high, topped by a cupola supported on eight stone pillars. It is built of red sandstone ornamented with marble. Inside, on the second storey, are five rooms in a cruciform, with the central

OPPOSITE *The Sher Mandal inside the Purana Qila.*



The southern gateway, also called the Humayun Darwaza.

room much larger in size than its arms. The dados of the interior are panelled with encaustic tiles and the ceiling is ornamented with floral and geometrical patterns. Historians conjecture that the lower storey, which is closed on all sides, may have been used as a temporary resting place for the body of Humayun while his tomb was being built. The building may have been sealed, after the final interment, as a mark of respect to the former emperor.

Humayun's Tomb

Historians tend to dismiss Humayun (1530–56) as a non-entity, a hyphen between the many-faceted personality of Babur, his father, and the equally fascinating character of Akbar, his son; a man whose main virtue was that he held on to the empire long enough to allow one of the greatest rulers of the medieval world to ascend the throne. Yet Humayun's was not an unattractive character and though he may not have achieved much personally he could inspire others to great heights of affection. The story of how Babur wished away his life in return for that of his son, though perhaps of doubtful historicity, is typical. Once, when Humayun fell grievously ill, Babur, full of despair, offered to give away his most precious possession. Many thought that this would be the fabulous diamond the Koh-i-noor (Mountain of Light) but Babur, feeling that nothing could be more precious than his own life, walked round Humayun's bed thrice, crying aloud his offer to God. And Humayun recovered while Babur began to fail in health from that moment.

After Humayun's death in 1556, his senior widow Haji Begum returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca, brought with her a Persian architect, Mirak Mirza Ghiyas, to design a tomb for the late emperor. Humayun, who had been profoundly impressed by Persian poetry and painting, must have admired Persian architecture as well. He would have been pleased at the stone version of a typically Iranian glazed-tile tomb that was eventually built for him. This tomb was also to prove a landmark in the construction of

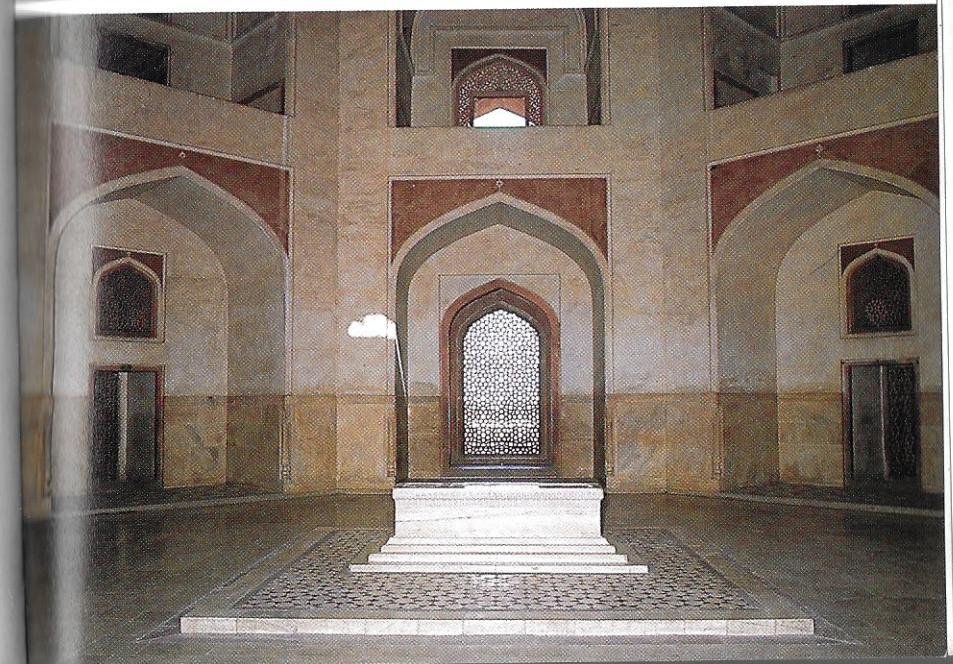
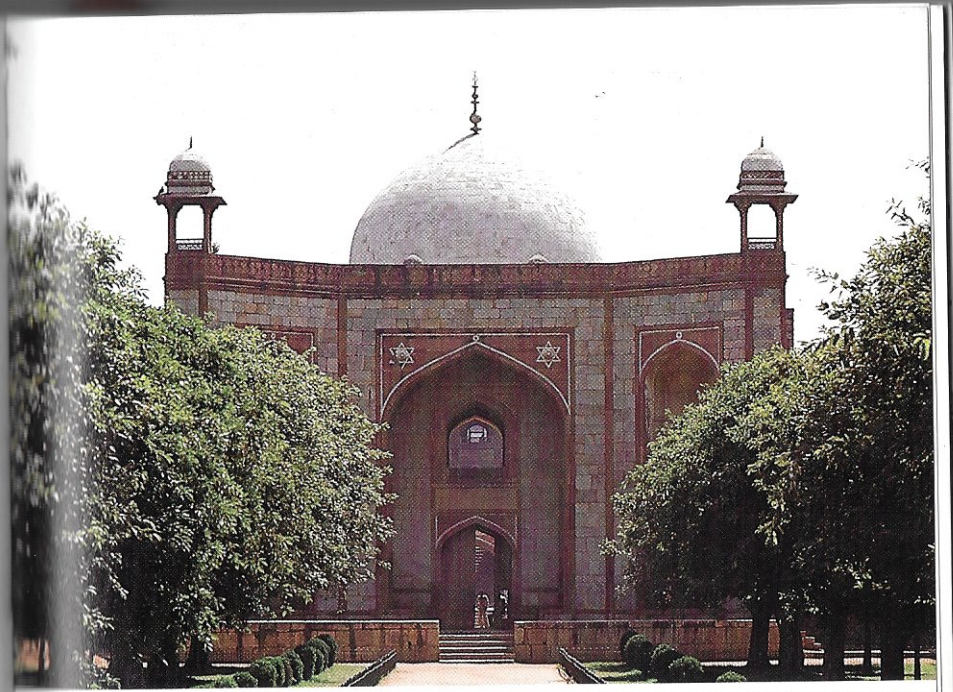


mausolea in India. The first of a long series of garden-tombs that the Mughals would build in which to consign their dead, this genre would reach perfection in the exquisite Taj Mahal at Agra.

Completed in 1573, nine years after it had been begun, Humayun's tomb was the first distinct example of the proper Mughal style—a remarkably creative fusion of the Indian and Iranian building traditions. Heavily Persian in inspiration, Humayun's tomb yet made concessions to its Indian setting, particularly in the extensive use of white marble which was practically unknown in Persia, and the eschewing of coloured tiles for decoration. Instead, stone of different hues was used to add a subtle touch of colour.

The use of *chhatris* on the roof too was decidedly Indian. The double dome, used here for the first time in India, was markedly Persian and its slightly bulbous shape too was a characteristic of late work in Persia and Turkey. The dome sits on a deep drum—a detail which was to be further refined till, in the Taj, the clever proportioning of the neck adds infinite grace to the dome. The double dome, which conceals considerable space between its inner and outer shells, was a response to the aesthetic problem of balancing the interior with the exterior. The outer dome was built to harmonize with the exterior proportions of the building while the inner dome was in proportion to the inner space enclosed. In Humayun's tomb the inner dome leaves as much space above as below, for it is exactly midway between the floor and the top of the marble-cased outer dome. A typical Arab finial, rather than the lotus-flower finial found so extensively on Sayyid and Lodi buildings, tops the dome. The later Mughals would revert to the lotus-flower finial but here it is conspicuous by its absence. The dome, of red sandstone relieved with black and white marble, is so shaped, according to Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, Resident of Delhi during the 1857 Mutiny, that 'a man can walk up the slope which from below looks too steep for such a possibility'.

OPPOSITE ABOVE *The western gateway to Humayun's Tomb, and BELOW the cenotaph.*



The garden of the tomb is based on the Persian *char bagh* principle—square and divided into four main parterres by shallow stone water courses which are further divided into smaller squares by pathways. Though many of the trees originally planted have disappeared, the garden still retains its original layout. Two double-storeyed gateways, one to the west and the other to the south, screen the mausoleum from view till it can be sprung upon the visitor in all its glory. An open pavilion is built into the centre of the eastern wall and a bath chamber into the centre of the northern wall of the enclosure.

Before one reaches the western gateway to Humayun's tomb, however, one has to cross the Bu Halima garden—a rectangular enclosure with a raised platform to the north, said to be the tomb of Bu Halima, a lady of obvious wealth and position but otherwise unknown. To the east of Bu Halima's garden is a gateway in sharp contrast to the gateway to Humayun's tomb. Built in the older Lodi style it is decorated with coloured tiles and sandstone set in plaster. These two gateways, facing each other, show up the distance that has been travelled,

Isa Khan's Tomb.



architecturally speaking, between the Lodi and the Mughal styles in the short span of forty years.

Humayun's tomb itself is situated on a huge plinth of red sandstone with arched cells ornamented with white marble. Within it is a vault containing the real grave of Humayun and 154 other graves. On the next level is the main mausoleum the interior of which is a mosaic of octagonal compartments. The central chamber contains Humayun's cenotaph while the corner chambers, also octagonal, contain the graves of numerous later Mughals, though these are difficult to identify. Haji Begum herself lies buried in the north-eastern corner. In between the chambers are arched lobbies sealed with *jaalis*. These chambers, linked geometrically and visually yet independent spatially, function as an Iranian sequence of rooms as well as an enclosed inner sanctuary, as in Hindu buildings. On the roof arcades, arches, pinnacles and *chhatris* jostle for attention even as they are dominated by the dome. Around the drum of the dome are rooms and pavilions which once housed a *madrassa* or college attached to the mausoleum.

The area around Humayun's tomb contains numerous graves. The most important of these is the tomb of Isa Khan Niyazi, an Afghan grandee and the Commander-in-Chief of Sher Shah and, briefly, of his son Islam. Built in 1547, Isa Khan's tomb is like the octagonal tombs of the Lodis with all the essential features of that style—three arched openings to each side of the octagonal structure, angle buttresses, encircling verandah, an octagonal mortuary chamber and a closed western side to mark the *qibla*. The tomb is surmounted by a dome on a thirty-two-sided drum surrounded by eight *chhatris*. There are also numerous pinnacles around the drum and on a lower level each buttress too is crowned with a pinnacle. The drum is crowned with a lotus finial. The verandah soffit too is in a lotus shape.

Isa Khan's mortuary chamber is crammed with tombs, most of them still unidentified. A three-domed mosque projects outwards from the western side of the octagonal enclosure. The pointed arches of the three bays are decorated with inlaid tiles in blue and green.

Nearly three centuries after it was built, the final and most tragic act of the Mughal drama was played out at Humayun's tomb. In 1857 the gentle poet-king Bahadur Shah Zafar became the reluctant rallying point for Hindu and Muslim mutineers against the British. As the Mutiny fizzled out and the British regained control of the city, the king and his family took refuge in Humayun's tomb. On 22 September 1857 Captain William Hodson, a Briton of doubtful integrity but an intrepid horseman and the commander of a body of colourful soldiers known as 'Hodson's Horse', induced Bahadur Shah and his sons to surrender on guarantee of safety. On their way to the Red Fort, where their trial was to be held, Hodson brutally murdered two young sons and a grandson of Bahadur Shah at the Khooni Darwaza (Bloody Gateway), opposite Firoz Shah Kotla, and had their naked bodies displayed in Chandni Chowk. Bahadur Shah himself was exiled to Rangoon in Burma where he died on 7 November 1862, the last of the descendants of Timur to ascend the throne of Delhi.

Shahjahanabad

Legends in their own lifetime, the early Mughal emperors of India truly seemed to justify their titles: Jahangir (Seizer of the World); Shah Jahan (Ruler of the World); Alamgir (Seizer of the Universe). Descendants on the one hand of the Mongol warlord Chengiz Khan and on the other of the insatiable Turkish conqueror Timur, the Mughals could compare with the Caesars and the Medicis in their vast dominions, their fabulous wealth and their absolute power. Babur, the founder of the dynasty, had marched from his tiny kingdom in Kabul to capture Delhi in 1526 and establish an empire that would last 300 years and in its heyday span an area larger than that governed by the British in India—'and this without later aids such as the telegraph, railways and supplies from abroad'.

Of the first six Great Mughals only Shah Jahan, the fifth in his line, gave Delhi, as it was then known, its due. Babur never really took to India and longed all his life for his beloved Kabul, choosing ultimately to be buried there. Humayun, who was an opium addict, had too befuddled a reign to leave a mark anywhere. Akbar much preferred Agra, where he built the Red Fort by the river and a few miles from it founded the still beautifully preserved though now totally deserted capital city of Fatehpur Sikri. Jahangir divided his time between the much pleasanter climes of Lahore (now in Pakistan) and Srinagar. Shah Jahan, however finding the streets of Agra too narrow and winding for his multitudinous processions and the heat of the city oppressive, shifted his capital to Delhi in 1638. Here he not only built himself a massive fort on the bank of the river Yamuna and the largest and most beautiful mosque in India,

but he also laid a brand new city called Shahjahanabad or the City of Shah Jahan opposite the fort. This city, though much overlaid, survives till today and is now called Old Delhi.

Shah Jahan governed India from 1628 to 1658 and left behind a legacy of opulence, romantic love and rough justice. He was a ruler of great ability and a man with a highly refined artistic sense combined with a love for magnificence. He created buildings of great architectural splendour: the Taj Mahal at Agra, the forts at Delhi and Lahore, the great Jama Masjid at Shahjahanabad and a gem of a Pearl Mosque (Moti Masjid) at Agra. None of these could have been what they are without his personal inspiration and direction.

Shah Jahan also greatly refined Mughal architecture; under him it achieved a grace and fluidity of line that makes it a thing of beauty and a joy forever. An extensive use of white marble rather than red sandstone (as with Akbar) and an emphasis on inlay rather than elaborate carvings (as with Jahangir) became the hallmark of his style. The decorative use of various coloured and varied textured stone in inlay (insertion of shaped pieces of stone into cavities cut into the background material) and mosaic (the laying of shaped pieces of stone side-by-side) had been seen in India as early as 1540 in the mosque of Sher Shah in the Purana Qila, though mainly in simple geometrical patterns. White marble too had been used as building material for centuries. However, being fine-grained and highly decorative in its own right, marble imposes its own architectural values. Ornamentation, unless judiciously and sparingly used, tends to fret and confuse. Plain spaces acquire a value of their own and subtlety and restraint become prime virtues. It is to Shah Jahan's credit that he used this fine material with such dexterity and variety.

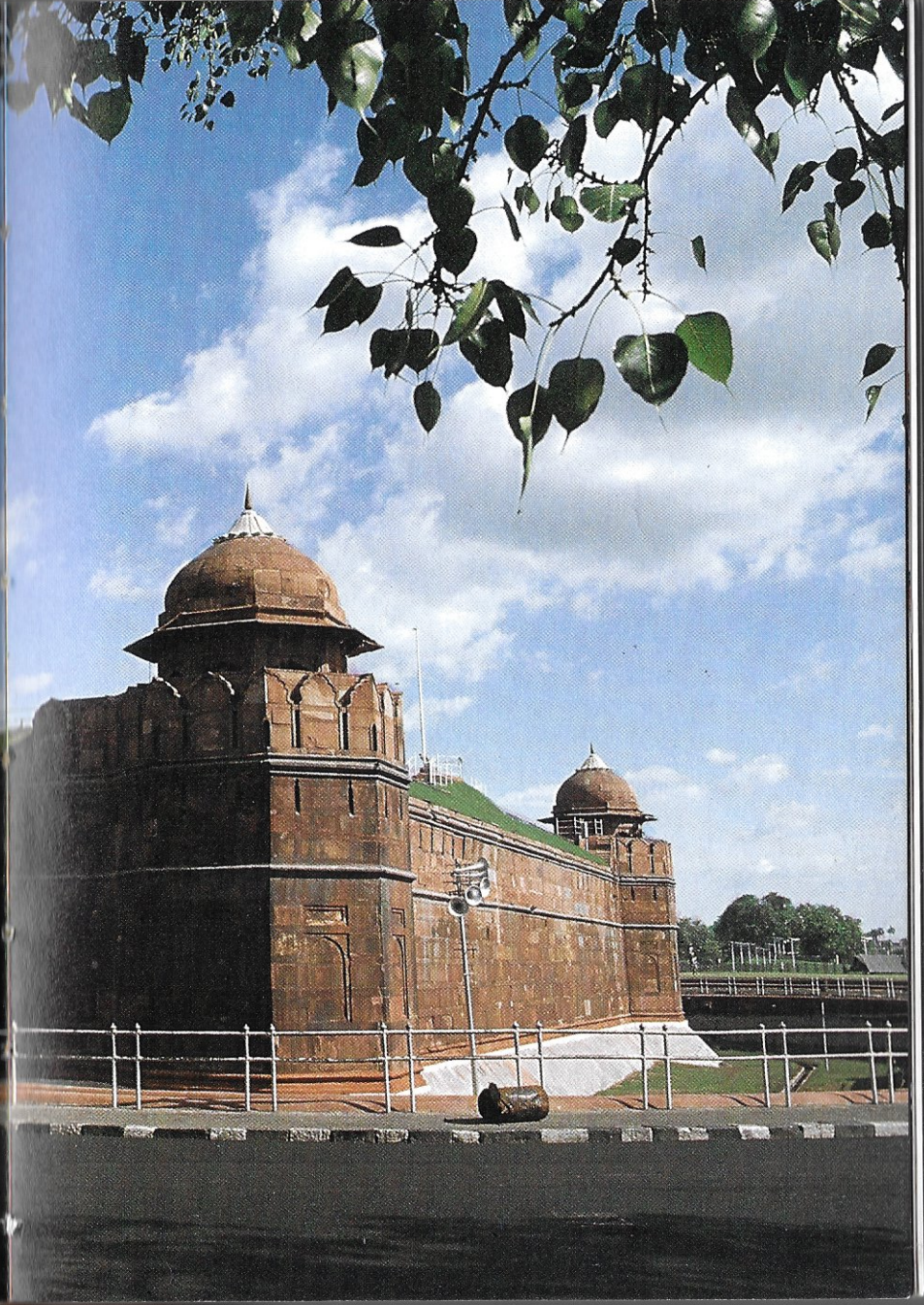
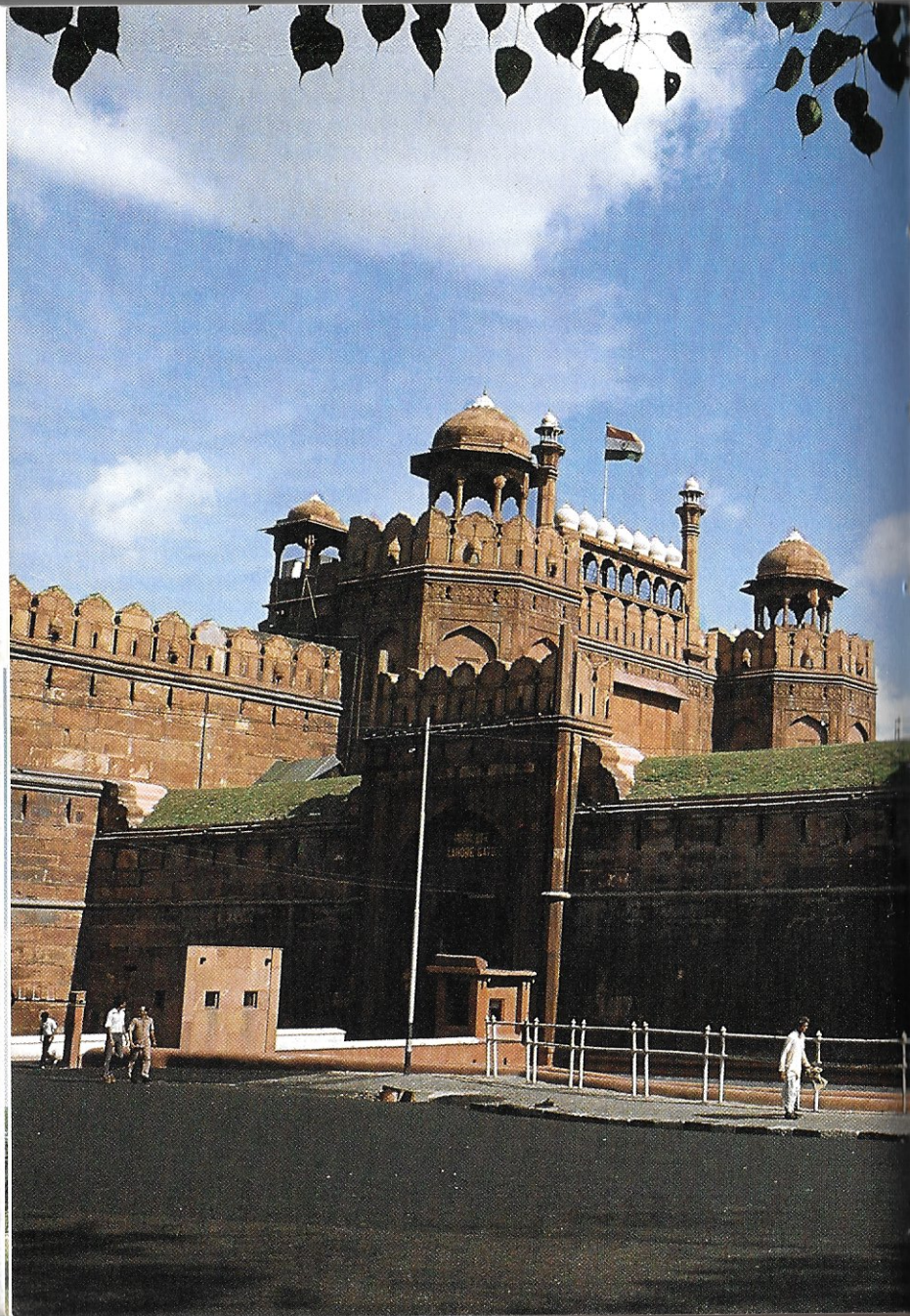
Called Qila Mubarak (Auspicious Fort), the Lal Qila or the Red Fort, as it is known today, was commissioned in 1639 and took nine years to build under the guidance of the expert builders Ustad Ahmad and Ustad Hamid. Meanwhile, Shah Jahan had already built the Taj half-way and redesigned sub-

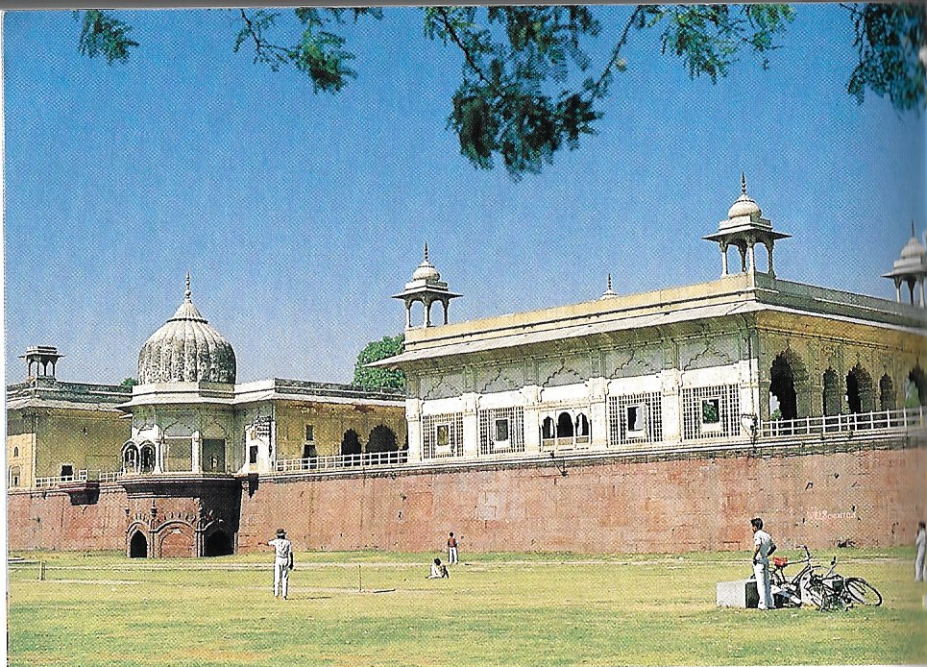
stantially the palace forts built by his father and grandfather at Agra and Lahore. After his work in Delhi he was only to build the Moti Masjid at Agra before being imprisoned and incapacitated by his third son Aurangzeb.

Spacious and well-planned, highly refined in concept and executed with a scrupulous attention to detail but a complete disdain for expense, Shahjahanabad was easily the finest of all the medieval cities of Delhi. However, both the city and the fort are immensely altered from their original layouts and a conscious effort has to be made to visualize their one-time splendour and glory. The Red Fort particularly, as it stands today, does not make sense to most people. How could kings and queens live in these 'tents in stone', they wonder. 'We have either to tell ourselves that it is all make-belief or to accuse the Mughals of having sacrificed comfort to a hard and showy elegance.'

We must keep in mind, first of all, that the royal palace was only the still centre of the royal camp. In fact originally it was even called the Urdu-i-mualla (Exalted Camp). For the Mughals, born nomads, it did not eliminate improvised outdoor living. We must also remember that immediately after the suppression of the Mutiny of 1857 the Red Fort was mercilessly plundered; looted not only of its internal objects, things that give a place its ambience and character, but stripped also of carpets and awnings, jewels and ornamentation, the blaze of colour, the flow of water and the bloom of flowers. It was also denuded externally by the civil and military officers of the British government when they demolished and destroyed on a large scale—up to 80 per cent of the interior of the fort and a large area immediately outside it. And as if that were not enough, the Red Fort was also converted into a cantonment and barracks constructed right in the heart of the palace. The Rang Mahal was used for a long time as a mess for soldiers and the Diwan-i-Khas became the setting for balls and gala celebrations. All this brutalizing took its toll making Fergusson lament: 'Situated in the middle of a British barrack yard they [the remaining portions of the Red Fort] look like precious

OVERLEAF *The Lahore Gate and the 'curtain' in front.*





The river front gateway beneath the Mussaman Burj.

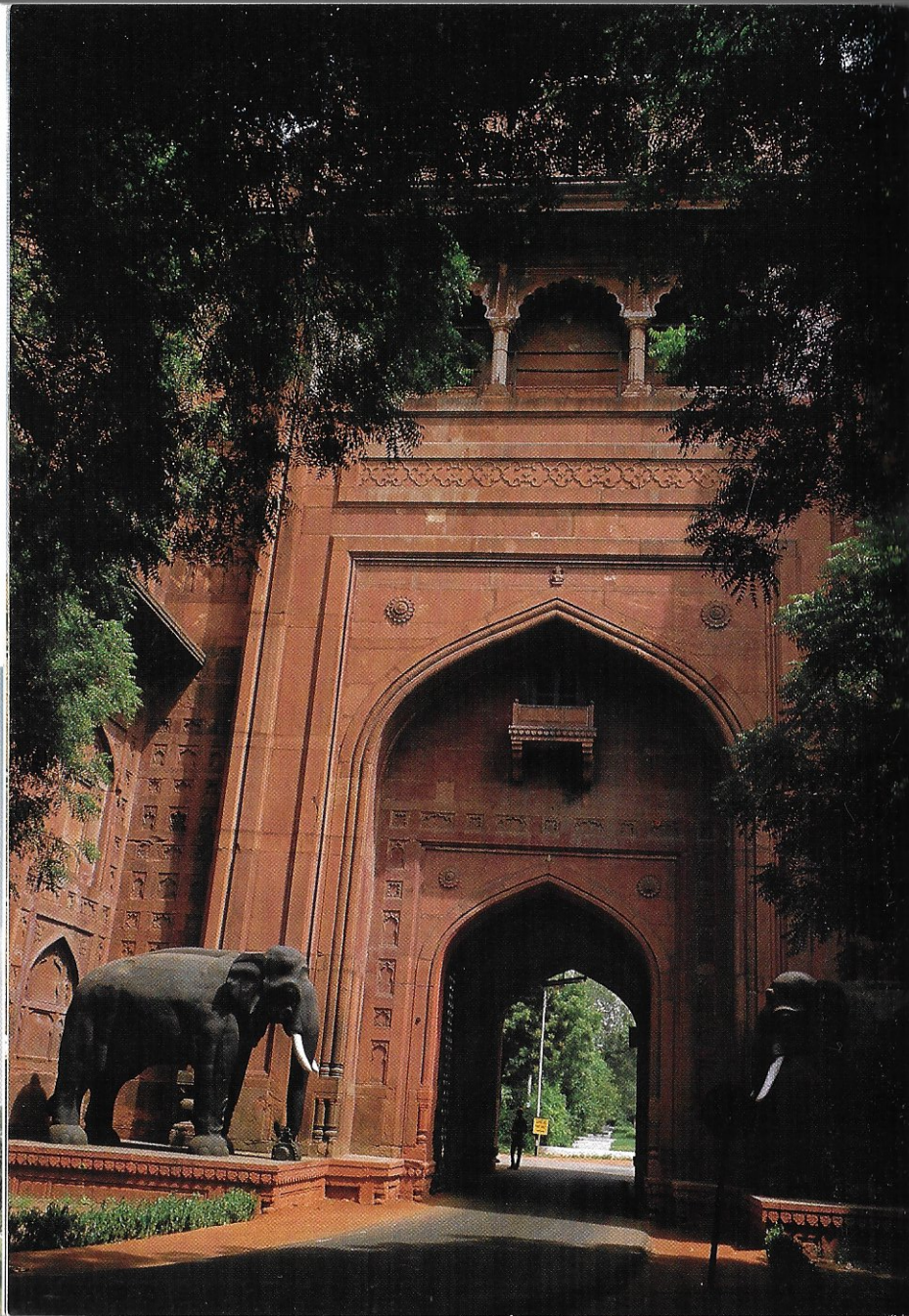
stones torn from their settings in some exquisite piece of oriental jeweller's work and set at random in a bed of commonest plaster.' To be able to fully appreciate the Red Fort one must go back in time and recreate it as it must have been in the days of Shah Jahan.

Built of the same red sandstone as Akbar's Fatehpur Sikri and surrounded by walls copied from his fort at Agra and rising up to 33.5 metres on the city side, the Red Fort encloses an area of about 124 acres. Situated close to the original course of the river Yamuna and forming the eastern wall of the city of Shahjahanabad, the fort is surrounded by a moat 22.8 metres wide and 9.14 metres deep and originally connected with the river. The fort was open to the Yamuna on the eastern side which was spanned in those days only by a bridge of boats. It was here, on a terrace about 609.6 metres long and 16.2 metres high, that the most beautiful buildings of the palace were

situated. Just below this terrace stretched a sandy beach up to the river which was used for parading animals, staging elephant fights and numerous other kinds of entertainment that the emperor and the ladies of the palace, normally in *purdah*, could watch from above.

The fort originally had six entrances, big and small, of which the Lahore Gate and the Delhi or Akbarabadi Gate to the west and south are the main gates now. In front of both these gateways stood a pair of life-size stone elephants. Later Aurangzeb, Shah Jahan's son and successor and a much more determined Muslim than his father, had them removed because he found them to be un-Islamic. In 1903 the remains of these were rescued by the British and a pair put up again at the Delhi Gate. Aurangzeb also widened the Lahore Gate to accommodate the large supplies that came in from that direction and put up barbicans in front of both gateways. He also built the high wall or 'curtain' in front of the Lahore Gate to prevent the emperor, when seated on his throne in the Diwan-i-Am, from seeing right down the Chandni Chowk, thus obliging all nobles to dismount and walk the entire length of the bazaar, for no one except princes could ride in the emperor's presence. Another river front gateway exists right beneath the Mussaman Burj, the half octagonal tower in the centre of the river-front terrace.

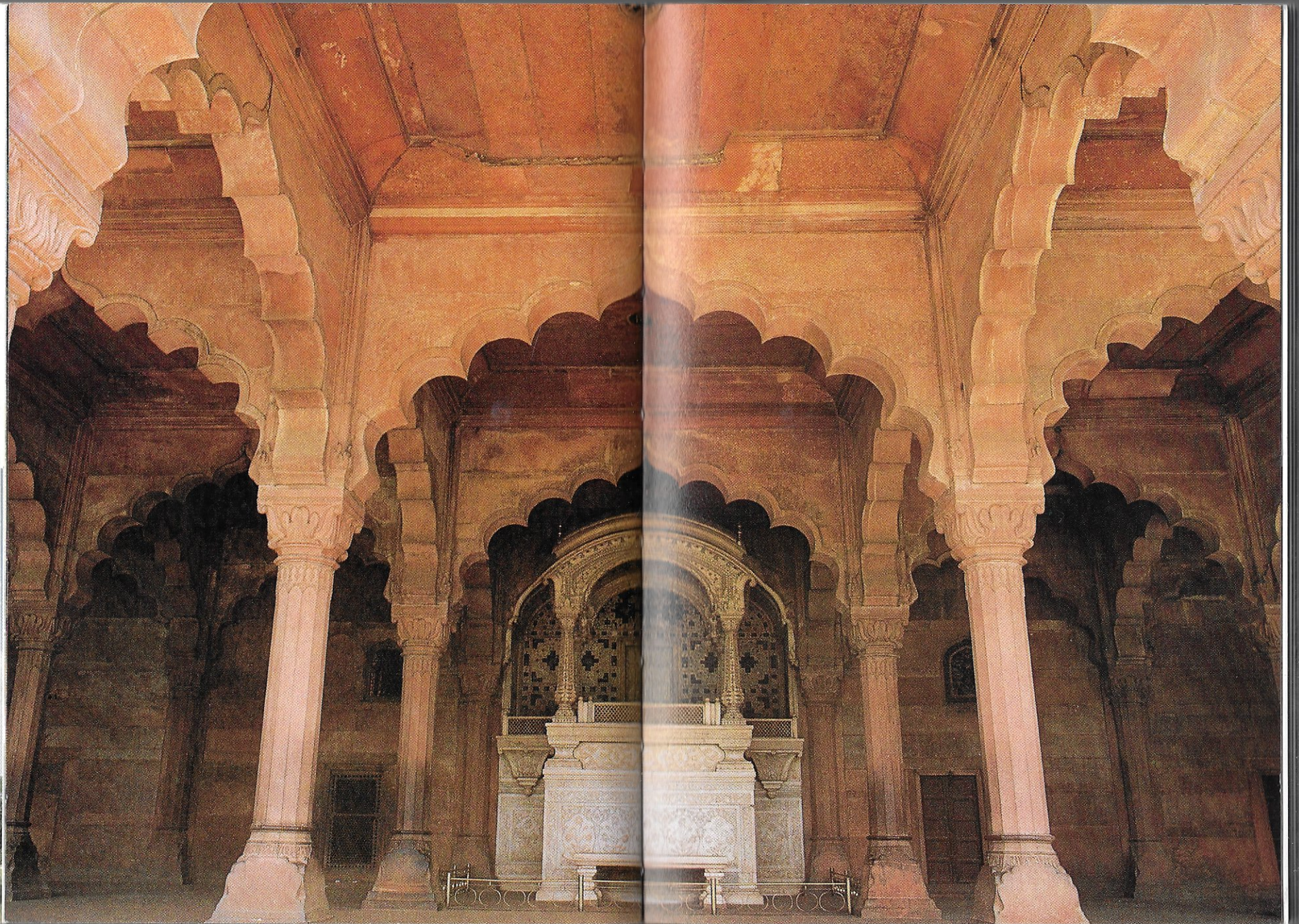
Immediately on crossing the main gate—the Lahore Gate, so called because it faced Lahore, then an important commercial and cultural centre—one arrives at a covered bazaar (Chatta Chowk or the Vaulted Arcade) where the best in silk, brocade, enamel, silver, gold and other precious goods was on sale for the emperor's household and others in his train. In length 82.2 metres and 8.2 metres wide, the Chatta Chowk had thirty-two double-storeyed arcaded shops on either side of a central pathway with an octagonal court in the middle, open to the sky, to provide light and fresh air. The Chatta Chowk leads on to the Naubat or Nakkhar Khana (Drum House), a three-storeyed music pavilion-cum-gate-house where martial music was played five times a day. A large open gallery 30.4 metres by 24.3 metres was reserved



for musicians on the second floor. François Bernier, the French physician who spent six years in Mughal India from 1658 to 1664, writes that the music consisted of hautboys and cymbals and was solemn, grand and melodious. Dresses of honour, to be conferred by the emperor on dignitaries, were kept in the rooms on either side of the archway on the ground floor. Excepting nobility, everyone had to dismount at the Naubat Khana and proceed further on foot. Immediately in front of the Naubat Khana was a square lined with small rooms meant for the nobles on guard duty and their attendants. In the south-western corner of the courtyard were several buildings meant for the *wazir* and the superintendent of the imperial household.

This square led on to the Diwan-i-Am or the Hall of Public Audience. A large single-storeyed pavilion, 12 metres by 24 metres, made of red sandstone, it is supported by cusped arches on sixty pillars, so positioned that the emperor, when seated on his throne, could be seen by each and every person present in the hall without obstruction. The pavilion was originally covered with shell-plaster, polished to the smoothness and whiteness of marble, decorated with gilded stucco-work and hung with heavy curtains. It is open on three sides and on the fourth set in a niche is a projecting balcony made of polished white marble upon a richly carved platform. Before it stands another lower platform also of marble ornamented with inlay. The emperor's throne canopy, which is profusely decorated with inlay of precious stones, affords an interesting comparison between this fine jeweller's art as it developed in the east and the west. It is conjectured that the panels set in black marble in the back wall of the niche were executed in Florence by Austin of Bordeaux and show a variety of birds and flowers, and in one Orpheus playing the lute. These panels, unlike the work on the throne canopy or even in the spaces between the Florentine panels (which also depict birds and flowers as well as geometrical patterns) tend to be highly figurative and convey in stone the quality of pictures

OPPOSITE *The Delhi Gate of the Red Fort with life-size stone elephants, and*
OVERLEAF *The Diwan-i-Am and the emperor's throne canopy.*



attention. In a small rectangular area near the balcony, enclosed within a gold railing, would stand the people of note: princes, ambassadors and great nobles. Beyond this, enclosed within a silver railing would be the lesser nobles and further yet, within a red sandstone railing, erected in the courtyard beyond the Diwani-i-Am would stand the minor officials. In this assembly, the most formal of his public appearances, the emperor would make appointments, listen to dispatches, receive ambassadors, gifts and reports, and dispense justice. Reminders of the awesome power of the emperor stood nearby in the shape of 'his sheriffers, together with his master hangman' and his assistants, some of whom carried hatchets, others whips, etc. A large stone grille to the right of the *wazir's* platform housed prisoners and criminals on whom sentence was to be pronounced—and often enough carried out on the spot.

Behind the Diwan-i-Am and ranged on the river-front stood the most elegant mansions in the palace, serving both private and public functions, for the imperial palace was also the seat of government. In Shah Jahan's time there were six main palaces on this side, of which the last but one on the southern extremity has vanished. These open, single-storeyed flat-ceilinged pavilions were built as inter-connecting courts, linked and cooled by channels of water. Later, Bahadur Shah Zafar, who after Shah Jahan contributed the most to the Red Fort, added two small marble pavilions to the range, calling them the Hira Mahal (Diamond Palace) and the Moti Mahal (Pearl Palace). Of these, the Moti Mahal is lost and the Hira Mahal is much mutilated.

At the northern extremity stood the Shah Burj, a three-storeyed octagonal tower which suffered great damage during the Mutiny and is now closed to the public. The *Nahr-i-Bihisht* or the Stream of Paradise which flowed through all the apartments on the river side, adding elegance and sparkle to them all, entered the palace at the Shah Burj. After watering the gardens, filling the pools and sustaining the fountains it emptied out into the moat that surrounded the fort. At the

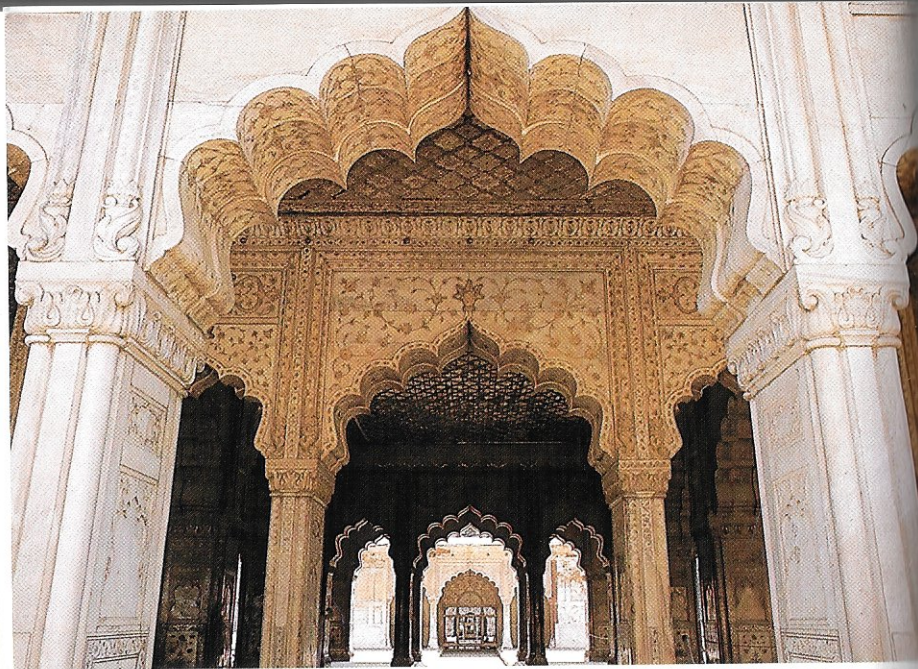
south-eastern extremity stands another tower, called the Asad Burj or the Lion Tower. The Shah Burj or the Royal Tower was used by Shah Jahan for very private sessions which only the select few could attend.

Attached to the Shah Burj is a white marble pavilion with a sloping water chute constructed, in all probability, during Aurangzeb's time. The *Nahr-i-Bihisht* flowed down the chute into a marble scalloped basin before being channelized to the gardens and the palaces.

South of the Shah Burj lies the Hira Mahal followed by the Hammam or the bath. The bath was an important part of any mansion and the royal baths were not only bathing rooms but also a place where very private councils were held. The practice is supposed to have started with Sher Shah, who held council in his bathroom while drying his hair after his bath. From this the term *ghusl-khana*—literally bathroom—also came to mean a very private council. Built primarily of marble and decorated with inlay, glass and paint and topped at one time with three marble domes, the

The richly decorated interior of the Hammam.





The Diwan-i-Khas in which once stood the Peacock Throne.

royal bath consisted of three main apartments separated by corridors, with canals to carry water to each room. The room to the west provided hot vapour baths while the room to the east, with three fountains, one of which sprayed rose-scented water, was a dressing-room. The third room provided cold-water baths. Light was admitted into the apartments through stained glass windows.

Next to the Hammam lies the most opulent apartment ever constructed by Shah Jahan, the Diwan-i-Khas or the Hall of Special Audience, also known as the Shah Mahal or the King's Palace. Built of pure white marble and richly decorated, this apartment cost one million four hundred thousand rupees to construct. The court which lay before this hall was paved with marble, with a fountain in the centre which fell over niches containing lighted lamps. All round the court were arcaded rooms. At either end of the Diwan-i-Khas stood two small

pavilions with curved Bengali roofs as in the throne canopy in the Diwan-i-Am. All the structures in front of and on either side of the Diwan-i-Khas were removed in the interests of 'security' after 1857.

Built upon a raised plinth and supported upon thirty-two pillars, of which twenty-four are square and the eight of the central bay rectangular, the Diwan-i-Khas was most sumptuously decorated. The lower portions of the walls and the pillars were studded with agates, pearls and other precious stones, while the ceiling was of silver, inlaid with precious stones set in floral patterns. Four small domed marble *chhatris* were set at the four corners of the roof while the Nahr flowed beneath the apartment. Within the room on a wide marble dais stood the world-famous Peacock Throne, the most splendid of eleven such thrones possessed by Shah Jahan. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, the French professional jeweller who claims to have seen the throne from close quarters, has left a detailed description which is too long to quote, but of which here is an extract:

I counted the large *balass* rubies on the great throne, and there are about 108, all *cabuchons*, the least of which weighs 100 carats, but there are some which weigh apparently 200 and more. As for the emeralds, there are plenty of good colour, but they have many flaws; the largest may weigh 60 carats and the least 30 carats. I counted about 116; thus there are more emeralds than rubies. The underside of the canopy is covered with diamonds and pearls, with a fringe of pearls all round and above the canopy, which is a quadrangular-shaped dome, there is to be seen a peacock with elevated tail made of blue sapphires and other coloured stones, the body being of gold inlaid with precious stones, having a large ruby in front of the breast, from whence hangs a pear-shaped pearl of 50 carats or thereabouts, and of a somewhat yellow water. . . . On the side of the throne which is opposite the court there is to be seen a jewel consisting of a diamond of from 80 to 90 carats weight, with rubies and emeralds round it. . . . But that which in my opinion is the most costly thing about

this magnificent throne is, that the twelve columns supporting the canopy are surrounded with beautiful rows of pearls, which are round and of fine water, and weigh from 6 to 10 carats each.

It was this throne which was carried off by Nadir Shah when he plundered Delhi in 1739. It is now completely lost. The famous couplet of the fourteenth century poet Amir Khusro, 'If there be a Paradise upon earth, / It is this, it is this, it is this', is to be found in this hall in two sets of panels below the cornice over the corner arches of the inner court. It is interesting to note that the same inscription is also to be found in Jahangir's famous garden at Srinagar, the Shalimar Bagh, and that whereas Jahangir found his paradise in nature, in the open, amidst waterfalls and flowers and greenery, Shah Jahan found his in the essentially urban setting of a palace.

The Diwan-i-Khas has witnessed not only the glamour and the grandeur of the Mughals, it has witnessed their misfortune as well. In 1739 Nadir Shah received the submission of the effete Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah Rangila (Muhammad Shah the Merry-maker) in this hall. Within two decades Ahmed Shah Abdali, another Afghan, had arrived to loot and pillage Delhi. In 1788 Emperor Shah Alam was blinded by the Rohilla chieftain Ghulam Qadir in this very hall. By 1803 he had, for all practical purposes, handed over power to the British, who had rescued him from the Marathas, when he received General Lake here and agreed to be a titular king, while the British took over effective control of the city. And in 1858 Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last of the Mughals, was tried in the same hall for the part he had played in the Mutiny, and, being found guilty, was exiled to Rangoon to die there in ignominy in 1862.

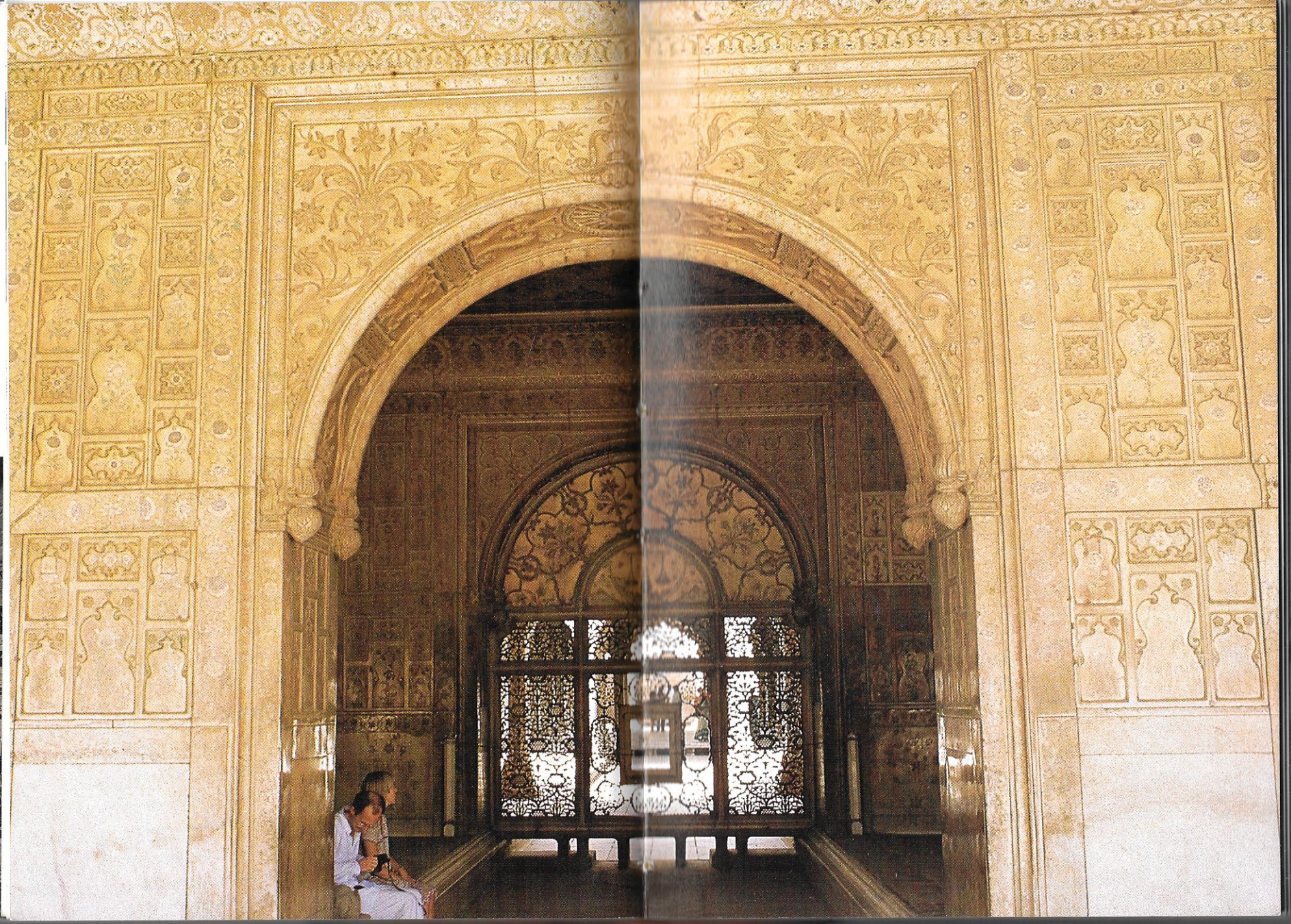
South of the Diwan-i-Khas lie the private apartments of the emperor called the Khas Mahal (Private or Special Apartments). The Nahr-i-Bihisht flowed through this apartment, dividing it into two. To the west of the Nahr is the bed-chamber, known as the Khwabgah, and attached to it is a smaller room for telling the beads known as the Tasbih Khana.

To the east, towards the river, is a large room known as the Baithak or the Sitting Room and leads on to a *jharokha* or overhanging gallery where the emperor would appear to his subjects at sunrise each morning. Large crowds would gather for this special audience and the emperor would sometimes also receive petitions and complaints. Loyal subjects would not begin the day without first getting a glimpse of the emperor, for his personal appearance at this balcony testified to his well-being. Later, Aurangzeb was to abolish this practice saying that it smacked of idolatry.

The semi-octagonal tower crowned with a dome that contains the balcony or the *jharokha* is called the Mussaman Burj. The balcony itself is rectangular and has a curved Bengali roof and a low marble screen at the base. The room behind it has four large marble grilles on either side of the *jharokha*. Beneath the Khas Mahal are steps that lead to a gate giving on to the river, called the Khirzi Gate. It was from this gate that Shah Jahan entered the fort when he inaugurated it on 19 April 1648. It remained the principal entrance for all dignitaries coming to attend on the emperor in the Diwan-i-Khas.

To the south of the Khas Mahal lie the apartments of the royal seraglio, called the Rang Mahal or the Palace of Colour. The apartments are divided into six chambers by engrailed arches and topped with four flat-roofed red sandstone *chhatris* on the four corners of its roof. The lower walls of the Rang Mahal were painted in bright colours from whence the apartment gets its name. The ceiling was originally made of silver inlaid with gold but in the reign of Akbar II (1806–37) the silver ceiling was replaced with one of copper, and later that too with one of painted wood—still beautifully preserved and still a delight to behold. The four corner chambers have tiny pieces of glass embedded in the upper walls and ceilings which reflect back a thousandfold the light of candles. Known as the Sheesh Mahal or the Hall of Mirrors, the rooms recreate the glory of a star-lit sky at night. Beneath the Rang Mahal are underground apart-

OVERLEAF *The marble screen with the scale of justice in the Khas Mahal.*



ments meant to be used in summer to escape the heat.

In the centre of the Rang Mahal is an inlaid marble fountain carved and veined in the shape of a huge open lotus flower. The water from this fountain flowed over through a narrow opening in the plinth into a shallow marble basin inlaid with mosaics in the shape of rose petals and jasmine blossoms which seemed to move as the water swirled over them. The Rang Mahal was the largest building in the women's section of the palace and was meant for communal activity. In this area no males other than the emperor and his sons were allowed. The emperor used this pavilion when he relaxed in pleasant female company listening to music, poetry and story-tellers or being entertained by dancing girls.

South of the Rang Mahal stands the Mumtaz Mahal, a palace originally meant for Shah Jahan's eldest and favourite daughter Jahanara Begum who had been the first lady of the realm ever since her mother's death in 1631. It was part of a

The inlaid marble fountain inside the Rang Mahal.



whole complex meant to serve as the living quarters for the ladies of the palace: wives, sisters, widows and concubines of the great Mughal. Most other structures have now disappeared, as also the gardens, pools, fountains and brightly paved lanes that marked this area of the palace fort. The Mumtaz Mahal, which now houses a museum pertaining to the Mughals, once had a delicately carved marble screen on the eastern side and walls and ceiling richly painted and embedded with pieces of glass. The museum itself is well worth a visit as it is replete with numerous Mughal objects of everyday use: jewellery, manuscripts and even a coin collection.

Interspersed with the apartments and pavilions in the palace-fort were numerous and varied gardens. Flowing water and beautifully laid gardens, both formed an integral part of the palace, and half the charm of the Red Fort today is lost because of the absence of water and flowers, both of which the Mughals used with great skill and to great effect. François Bernier records:

There is almost no Chamber but it hath at its Door a Storehouse of running water; that 'tis full of Parterres, pleasant Walks, shady Palaces, Rivolets, Fountains, Jets of Water, Grottas, great Caves against the Heat of the Day....

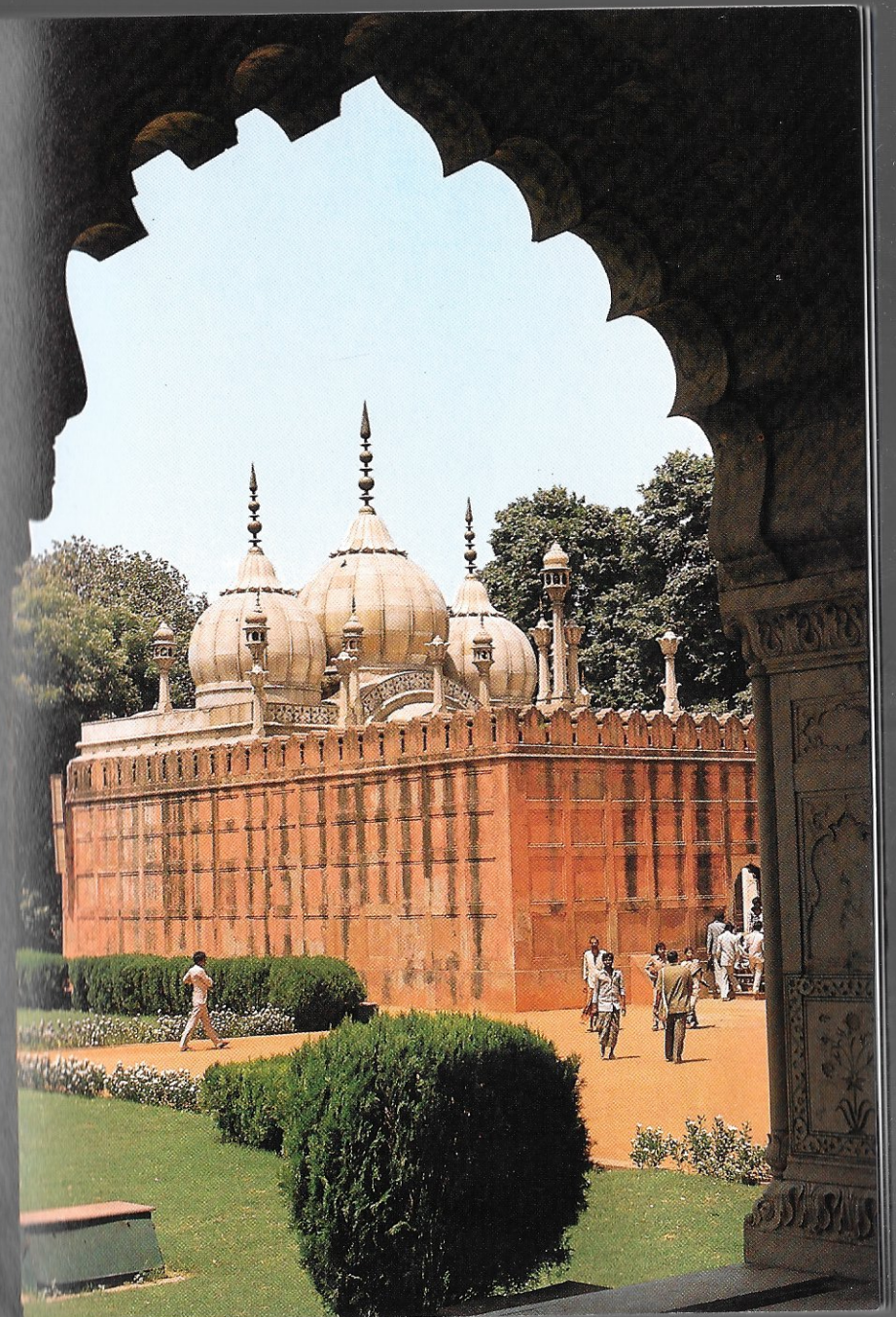
The main gardens within the palace were laid out in the northern part of the fort and were called the Hayat Baksh (Life-giving Garden) and the Mahtab Bagh (Moon Garden), both of which lay side by side. Little is known about the Mahtab Bagh except that it was planted with flowers in white like the jasmine, tuberose, lilly and narcissus, chosen primarily for their delicate fragrance. It was enclosed by rows of cypress trees, as was also the Hayat Baksh. It had an open pavilion of red sandstone laid in the middle, through which flowed the Nahr-i-Bihisht. This garden no longer exists while the Hayat Baksh no longer retains its original layout.

The Hayat Baksh was meant to be a water garden and was planted with flowers in bright hues such as orange, purple

and crimson. In the middle of the garden was a large rectangular pool, in the centre of which stood an open pavilion (*barahdari*) surrounded by 49 silver fountains. Another 112 fountains lined the sides of the pool. Four canals emanated from the pool each containing 30 silver fountains. The canals terminated at the north and the south ends in two small similar pavilions of white marble raised on red sandstone plinths, Sawan and Bhadon. Sawan and Bhadon are the names of the two months when the monsoon breaks over India, and which could roughly be translated as Light Rain and Torrential Rain. The entire attempt in the Hayat Baksh was to recreate the effect of monsoon showers which, in India, are an experience in themselves. The Sawan and Bhadon pavilions still exist but the pool has dried up and the fountains have disappeared. The southern one has arched niches cut into its only wall in which were placed flowers in gold and silver pots during the day and lighted candles at night. Just above the niches is an opening in the wall to let the water through, which would then cascade over the flowers/candles creating picturesque effects. Similarly, in the middle of the northern pavilion is a tank, in the four sides of which are again cut niches for flowers/candles. Four marble slabs projecting marginally over the niches would direct the water so that it fell well beyond them and did not extinguish the candles or destroy the flowers. They also helped the water to form a broad sheet, creating the effect of a waterfall. What stands in the middle of the garden today (to the north-west of the Pearl Mosque) is a tank with a red sandstone pavilion called the Zafar Mahal after Bahadur Shah Zafar who built it. Between the Rang Mahal and the Diwan-i-Am was laid out another garden with a pool with a marble basin in its centre. Nothing more is known about this garden.

The mosque that Shah Jahan built in Shahjahanabad, the Jama Masjid, was designed to be as grand as the palace. Situated on a hillock, it was meant to be one of the two cardinal points in the city, the other being the fort. The emperor

OPPOSITE *The Moti Masjid built by Aurangzeb.*



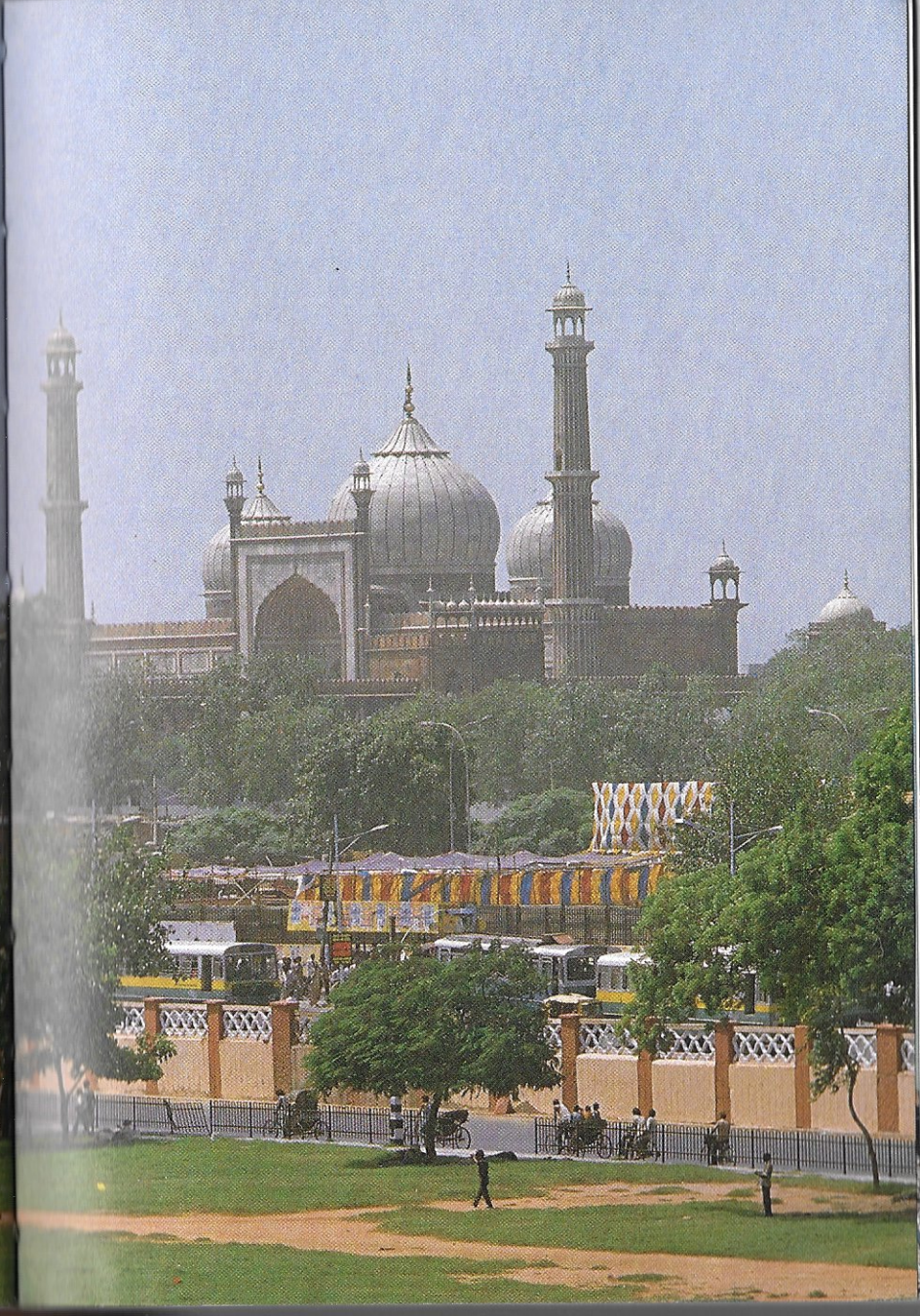
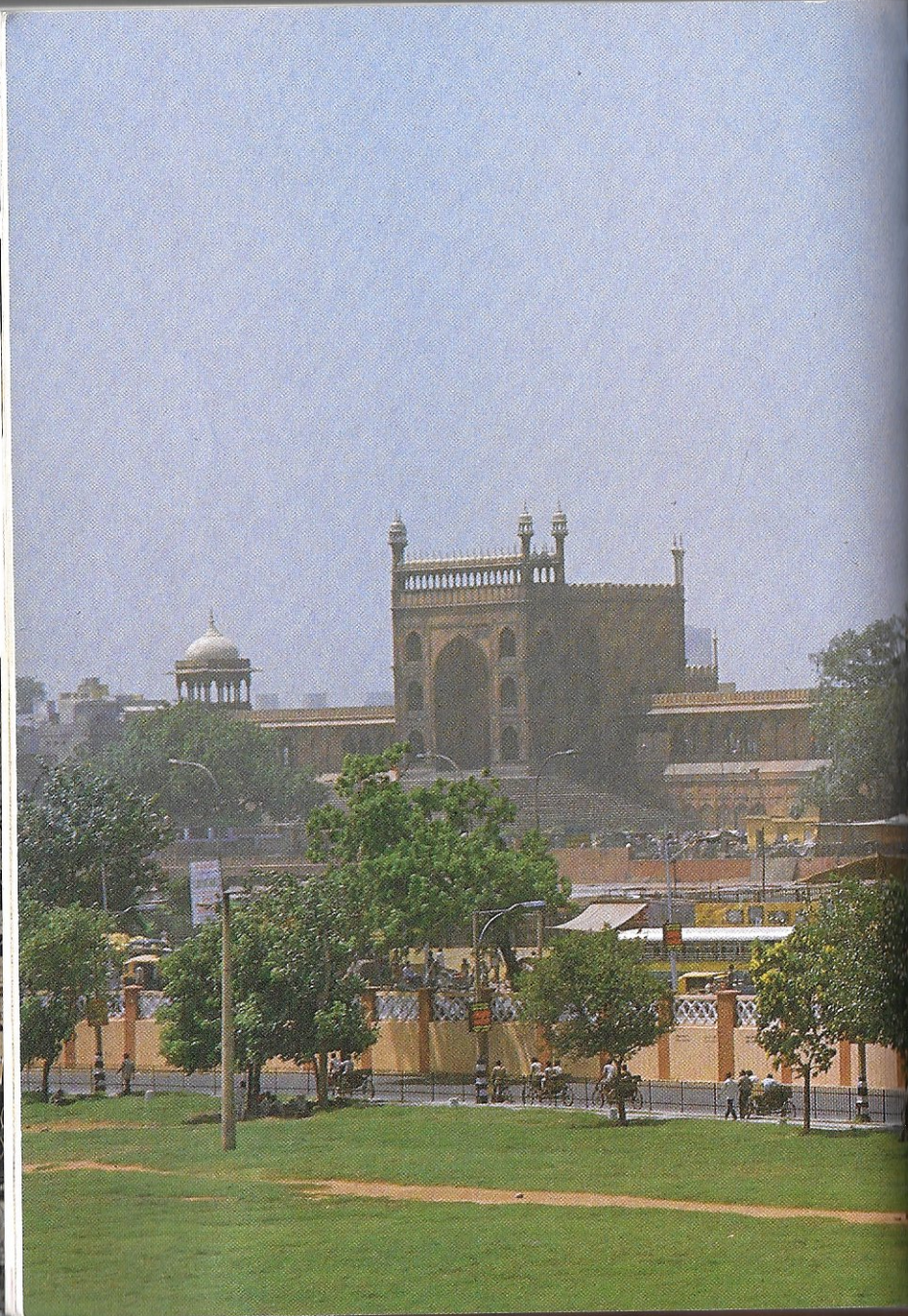
would ride to it in state on Fridays, the day prescribed for public prayer in Islam, and other important days of special prayer. In 1659 the stern and orthodox Aurangzeb built within the Red Fort a small mosque (12.9 metres by 9.14 metres) for private prayer, as if deliberately underlining what Shah Jahan had left out in his celebration of magnificence and beauty. However, the mosque also accurately exposes the contradictions of Aurangzeb's character. Called the Moti Masjid or the Pearl Mosque, it is a highly ornate structure, reflecting the ostentatious humility so characteristic of Aurangzeb. Of pure white marble inside and red sandstone on the outside, it has the sinuous lines and over-ornamentation typical of Mughal architecture in decline. The three bulbous fluted domes, seemingly constricted at the neck, are also typical of the later style. Originally covered with copper, the domes were destroyed in the Mutiny of 1857, after which they were replaced with marble. They are topped with exaggerated lotus mouldings and finials.

The interior of the mosque is much more peaceful, with a restrained use of black marble and other coloured stones. There is a small fountain in the middle of the courtyard for ritual ablutions while the prayer hall, raised higher, is inlaid with the outlines of 126 *mussalls* or small prayer carpets, which, surely, should not be taken too seriously for well-endowed and well-fed Mughal ladies, who also used the mosque, could hardly be expected to accommodate themselves on one. A small pulpit with three steps stands to the right of the central of the three niches in the west wall. The northern wall has three stonework *jaalis* or perforated screens and a covered way by which the ladies of the palace could enter the mosque. An interesting feature of the mosque is the difference in alignment between the inner and the outer walls. While the outer walls maintain harmony with the rest of the buildings of the Red Fort and are aligned to the cardinal points, the inner walls are skewed slightly to face Mecca with exactitude. Another interesting feature is the domes and minarets carved into the façade of the inner side of the east wall, on either side of the entrance.



ABOVE *The interior of the Moti Masjid, and OVERLEAF the Jama Masjid.*

About 500 metres west of the Red Fort lies the Jama Masjid (Friday Mosque), or the Masjid-i-Jahanuma as it was called by Shah Jahan—'the mosque commanding a view of the world'. One of the few mosques in the world to be situated on an elevation, it was commenced in 1650 and took six years to complete at a cost of one million rupees. Built primarily of red sandstone with a judicious mixture of white marble, it is raised on a lofty basement and has three large gateways atop sweeping flights of steps. The northern and the southern gateways are double-storeyed structures while the eastern gateway, once reserved for royalty and now used only on special occasions, is three-storeyed. On the inner side of this gateway over the central arch is an oriel window with stone grilles. This window was meant for the royal ladies who could say their *namaaz* without being seen,



while themselves having a clear view of the pulpit and the Imam who led the prayer.

The courtyard of the mosque, nearly 100 metres square, is enclosed by an arched colonnade with *chhattris* or domed pavilions at the corners. Along the western front is the prayer hall, two-bay in depth with eleven arches cut into the façade, while the western wall behind it has seven arched niches all faced with white marble. The exterior arches too are faced with marble, with inscriptional panels set in black frames above them. The panels record the history and details concerning the construction of the mosque. On either side of the central arch, in two circular panels, is inscribed 'Ya Hadi' an invocation to Allah. Similarly, on either side of the central niche in the western wall, is inscribed 'Ya Gaffar' another invocation. The prayer hall is surmounted by three marble domes picked out with bands of black stripes and crowned with finials. The domes are set well back so that no disharmony results from the juxtaposition of the high central *iwan* or the raised central arch and its frame, and the domes. The effect is to make the domes seem to float in the air.

At the ends of the prayer hall are two three-storeyed tapering minarets, 39.6 metres high, crowned with white marble pavilions. Made of red sandstone, each storey has a projecting marble balcony. The minarets have broad stripes of white marble running up the entire length of each storey which culminate as white marble petals beneath the balcony. It is possible to climb the 130 spiral steps to the top of the minarets for a breathtaking view of the Chandni Chowk and the Red Fort.

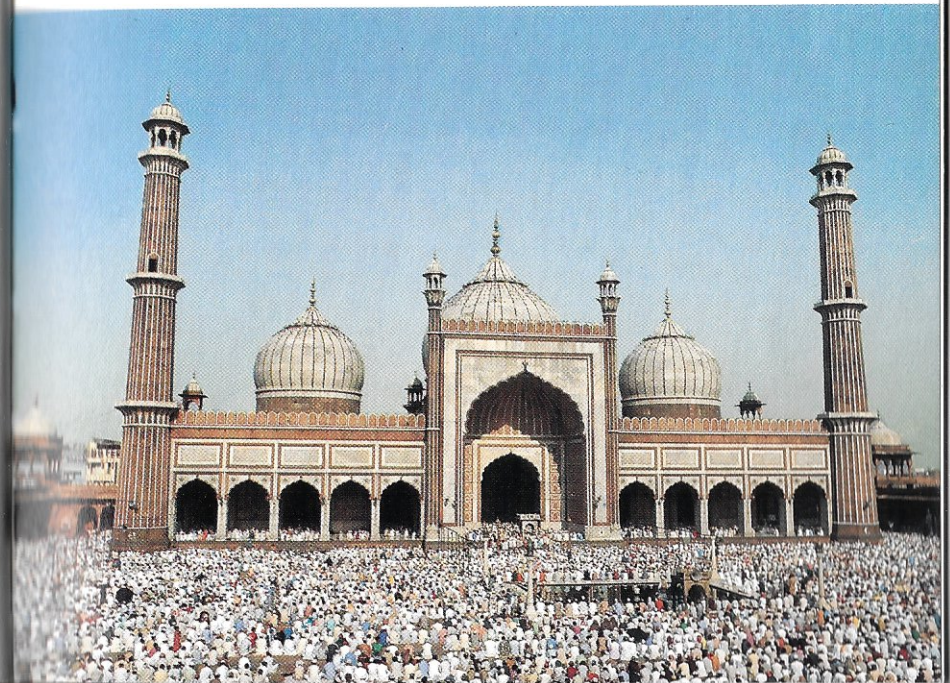
In the centre of the courtyard is a white marble tank with rounded tapering turrets topped with lamps at the four corners. Towards the eastern wall, on either side of the eastern gateway, are three low pillars. The one to the right has a map of the world engraved on it and was built in the 1830s by Akbar II, the sixteenth Mughal emperor. The two to the left were probably both sundials.

In the north-eastern corridor of the mosque, within a

wooden enclosure, are kept certain holy relics of the Prophet Mohammad, said to have been gifted to the mosque by Shah Jahan himself. They consist of a hair from the Prophet's beard, an imprint of His foot in stone, His slippers and some very early manuscripts of the Koran on calf-leather. The keeper claims to be a direct descendant of the one appointed by Shah Jahan as does the Imam or the leader of the congregational prayer at the mosque.

When occasion required, mosques and tombs could be occupied and put into a state of defence, as Humayun's tomb was in 1857 by Bahadur Shah Zafar. During the Mutiny Indian soldiers quartered themselves in the Jama Masjid and put up a stout defence against the British. When the British regained power the mosque, like the Red Fort, was occupied by British soldiers. An attempt was made first to fill up the tank in the courtyard and use the square for drills, then demolish the mosque and finally to convert it into a Christian church. However, better sense prevailed

Id prayers at the Jama Masjid.





Carved wooden enclosure in which are kept the holy relics of Prophet Mohammad.

and ultimately the Jama Masjid was restored to the Muslims of the city in November 1862, after they petitioned to be allowed to use it as a place for public worship.

Today the Jama Masjid has gone back to its old ways—or very nearly. There are congested markets on the steps of the Masjid and its immediate environs. Food stalls offering their version of Mughlai dishes, clothing, souvenirs, knick-knacks and many Muslim specialities can be found in the stalls that surround the Masjid.

In building Shahjahanabad, Shah Jahan aimed not only at providing himself a magnificent palace but also a well-laid-out and planned city. Impressed perhaps as much by the glowing reports he heard of the urban design of Isfahan in Persia—built by the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas—as by the ancient architectural texts of the Hindus, Shah Jahan's city reflected both influences. It was a city with a highly for-

malized infrastructure, provided with elegant mansions, expansive gardens, well-laid-out roads, markets, mosques and *serais* or inns. Laid out in the shape of a bow, it was fortified with a massive rubble-built wall, bastions and numerous gateways. Large portions of the wall were lost in the Mutiny and also later as the city bloated and expanded. Of the fourteen principal gateways, only a few survive, the best known ones being Ajmeri Gate, Delhi Gate and Kashmiri Gate.

From the two main gates of the fort, on the west and the south, extended elaborate boulevards. Each was lined with trees and had a deep marble-lined canal flowing down its centre. Of these the boulevard running east-west was the grander of the two. Built in 1650 by Jahanara Begum, the beautiful and talented daughter of Shah Jahan, it ran in a straight line for 951 metres from the Lahore Gate of the fort to Fatehpuri Mosque, built by Shah Jahan's wife Fatehpuri Begum. Lined with arcaded shops on both sides that provided an infinite variety of goods and services and interspersed with coffee shops where poets, writers and the literati could meet and exchange notes, this boulevard became the centre of the commercial as well as social life of the city. On full-moon nights the pool that Jahanara Begum had built in the middle of the octagonal chowk that divided the street into two was flooded with moonlight, and a pale silvery hue bathed the entire area. It thus came to be called Chandni Chowk, a name that carried the dual connotations of moonlight square as well as silvery street. In time the entire street came to be called Chandni Chowk and today even though the pool, the canal and most of the silver are gone, the name lingers.

To the north of the octagonal chowk, Jahanara Begum built a large *serai* for travellers and behind it laid a huge garden called the Begum-ka-Bagh. The garden was watered by a section of Ali Mardan's canal bringing water from Hisar some 161 kilometres to the north-west. In the northern half of Chandni Chowk the princes, nobles and courtiers built their palaces and mansions, making it more prosperous

than the southern half, which was densely built and accommodated the common people.

Today both Shahjahanabad and Chandni Chowk are changed beyond recognition, not only in physical terms but also in essence. The canals, the garden, the markets and *serais* have disappeared, and so has the leisured way of life, the grace and the charm. What survives within the confines of the walled city is not Mughal Delhi but the Delhi of the British Raj—mutilated, refashioned, unassimilated. The grandeur of the Mughals has been lost without British order and design being acquired. The old city is now chaotic, congested and fast going to seed. Yet it has a vitality and resilience difficult to find elsewhere, and a pride even more difficult to ignore. Sadly, much of the beauty of Chandni Chowk today must lie in the eye of the beholder.

Jantar Mantar

Right up Parliament Street, not far from the mad rush of Connaught Place but wreathed in greenery and invested with a strange quietude, is an unbelievable collection of structures called the Jantar Mantar. Jantar Mantar, which in its uncorrupted form should read Yantra Mandir (Temple of Instruments), consists of several strange-looking constructions which are in fact very scientifically and accurately devised astronomical instruments meant to carry out an organized study of celestial bodies in the absence of the telescope.

Built in 1724 by Sawai Jai Singh II (1699–1743), Raja of Amber and founder of the city of Jaipur, the Delhi observatory is the first of five such all over the country, the others being at Jaipur, Ujjain, Varanasi and Mathura. Built of stone and lime and all of Jai Singh's devising, the observatories are fairly well preserved, except for the Mathura observatory which no longer survives.

A man of extraordinary intellectual keenness and versatility and with ideas of reform far in advance of his society, Sawai Jai Singh rose to the highest level that a Hindu could at the court of the Mughals. He also held the governorship of important provinces like Malwa and Agra. James Tod of the *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* fame records that the observatories he built 'irradiate a dark period of Indian history' for Jai Singh did his pioneering work in the reign of Mohammad Shah, the merrymaking Mughal emperor who was so steeped in wine, women and song that the Mughal court became thoroughly devalued and debauched. He is

OVERLEAF *The Jantar Mantar with the Samrat Yantra in the foreground.*



remembered today chiefly for having surrendered tamely to the destructive fury of Nadir Shah, who not only carried away as much of the fabulous wealth of the Mughals as he could including the Koh-i-noor diamond and the Peacock Throne, but also mercilessly butchered the inhabitants of Delhi. And yet Jai Singh dedicated his book of astronomical calculations, the *Zij-i-Mohammad Shahi*, as well as the Delhi observatory to Mohammad Shah.

Before embarking on his unique experiments Jai Singh studied all the systems of astronomy then available to him—the Greek, the European, the Muslim and of course the Hindu. He had Aristotle and Euclid translated into Persian and Ptolemy into Sanskrit. However, he did not rely altogether upon books. He sent out men in various directions to make independent observations—some to Europe, some to a place where 'the southern pole was overhead' and some to the 'further islands'. He invited the Jesuits, Father Boudier from Bengal in 1733, and Father Antonie Gabelsperger and Father André Strobl from Germany in 1736, to advise him, paying all their expenses. He even had a telescope brought from Portugal but the instrument was not good enough to allow him to make accurate measurements.

The most popular astronomical system in Jai Singh's time was the Islamic. In the early fifteenth century King Ulugh Beg had built an observatory at Samarkand in Uzbekistan. He had also prepared a catalogue listing the positions of the stars in the heavens; this catalogue had become very popular and was the basis of most subsequent catalogues. On making independent observations, however, Jai Singh found that his measurements differed from those of Ulugh Beg. Calculations based on inaccurate positions of celestial bodies led to inaccuracies in the prediction of events such as the beginning of a lunar or a solar eclipse or even the sighting of the new moon. There was one reason immediately apparent to Jai Singh for these inaccuracies. Over the centuries astronomers had designed a variety of instruments to measure the positions of the stars as precisely as possible. Most of these, like the quadrant, the astrolabe and the sphere, were made of metal which tended

to wear out. They were also too small to be accurate, though some large instruments had been constructed in the Islamic countries. In the *Zij-i-Mohammad Shahi* Jai Singh complains:

Because of the smallness of their size, the want of division into minutes, the shaking and wearing of their axes, the displacement of the centres of the circles and the shifting of the planes of the instruments, they were not accurate enough.

Jai Singh then decided to persuade the Mughal Emperor Mohammad Shah to support the building of new, accurate instruments, designed by himself. He also decided to build them in stone and lime so that wear and tear would be eliminated. They would be of such large dimensions that accuracy would be ensured. The size of the instruments, however, made it imperative for an individual to enter them while making observations. So gaps had to be cut within the instruments to allow for easy movement. Jai Singh also built his instruments in pairs so that if in one instrument the shadow fell on the gap, in the other the shadow would fall on the graduated part. He also allowed for a drainage system so that accumulated rain-water would not damage the instruments or make them inoperable.

The Yantra Mandir at Delhi contains four chief instruments: the Samrat Yantra, the Ram Yantra, the Jai Prakash and the Misra Yantra. The Samrat Yantra or the Supreme Instrument is the chief instrument and is the largest and most imposing, though a considerable portion of it is below ground level. It is an equinoctial dial and is in principle one of the simplest 'equal hour' sundials. It can measure the time of day correct to half a second. It consists of a triangular gnomon with its hypotenuse parallel to the earth's axis, with quadrants of a circle parallel to the plane of the equator on either side of the gnomon. Each edge of the quadrant is graduated in hours and minutes as well as in degrees, and each edge of the gnomon has two scales of tangents. The shadow of the edge of the gnomon on the quadrant gives the local time. The sun's declination is determined by

observing which part of the gnomon's edge casts its shadow on the edge of the corresponding quadrant.

The Samrat Yantra is different from an ordinary sundial in that instead of having an upright rock or pillar to cast a shadow on the ground it has a gnomon with a slanting edge parallel to the spin axis of the earth. The upright gnomon points in different directions at different times as a result of the earth's rotation, making it difficult to use the length of the shadow to tell the correct time. In the Samrat Yantra, the gnomon being parallel to the earth's axis always points in the same direction, i.e. of the pole star even as it rotates with the earth. As the sun travels across the sky the shadow cast by this slanting edge moves across an arc that is parallel to the earth's equator. The arc, divided into equal portions, measures equal lengths of time and therefore provides greater accuracy as compared to a pillar or rock shadow clock.

The Samrat Yantra is 20.7 metres high, of which 18.3 metres is above ground level. It is 38.1 metres east to west and 34.6 metres north to south. The quadrants have a radius of 15 metres and are at right angles to the gnomon. On top of the gnomon is a circular pillar which was probably used originally for azimuth observations. The pillar is surmounted by a small European style sundial probably added in 1910 when the Jantar Mantar was restored by the order of Sawai Madho Singh.

Beneath the east quadrant of the Samrat Yantra is a chamber which used to contain the Shashthanisa Yantra, which was a large graduated arc 60 degrees in extent and built in the plane of the meridian. As the sun passed the meridian altitude it would shine on the arc through a small opening and from this its declination could be deduced. This chamber was sealed in 1910 and has not been used since.

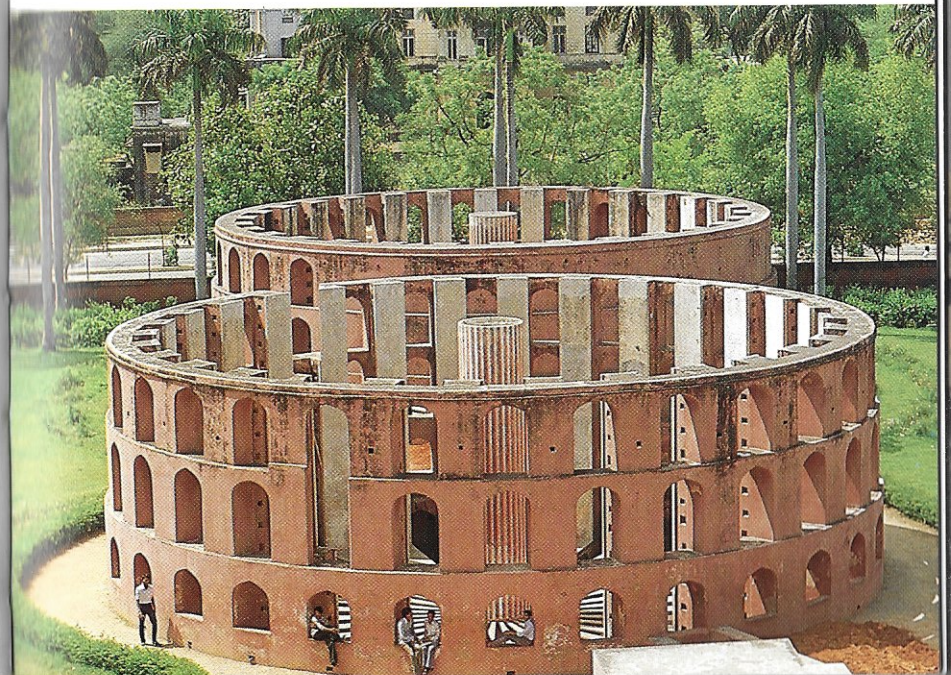
While the Samrat Yantra is primarily a sundial, the Ram Yantra and the Jai Prakash are designed to measure the positions of celestial bodies. The Ram Yantra named after one of Jai Singh's ancestors, is a cylindrical instrument open at the top with a pillar in the centre and with thirty raised floor segments radiating from the pillar. The inside of the circular wall

and the floor segments are both graduated for altitude and azimuth readings. The height of the wall from the graduated floor is equal to the distance from the circumference of the central pillar to the inside of the wall, i.e. 7.48 metres. The pillar is 1.6 metres thick and the graduated sectors are supported on pillars 0.91 metre high so that the eye can be placed easily at any point in the scale.

When the pillar in the centre casts a shadow on the vertical wall, the height of the shadow on the wall gives the height of the sun above the horizon. The markings on the vertical segments give the exact location of the sun with respect to the north. With these two readings the position of the sun in the sky can be fixed with exactitude. In the same way the positions of the moon, the planets and the stars can also be determined.

The Jai Prakash, gives local time, the sun's declination and the zodiacal sign or group of stars on the meridian. Situated immediately to the south of the Samrat Yantra, it consists of two complementary concave hemispheres with cross

The Ram Yantra.

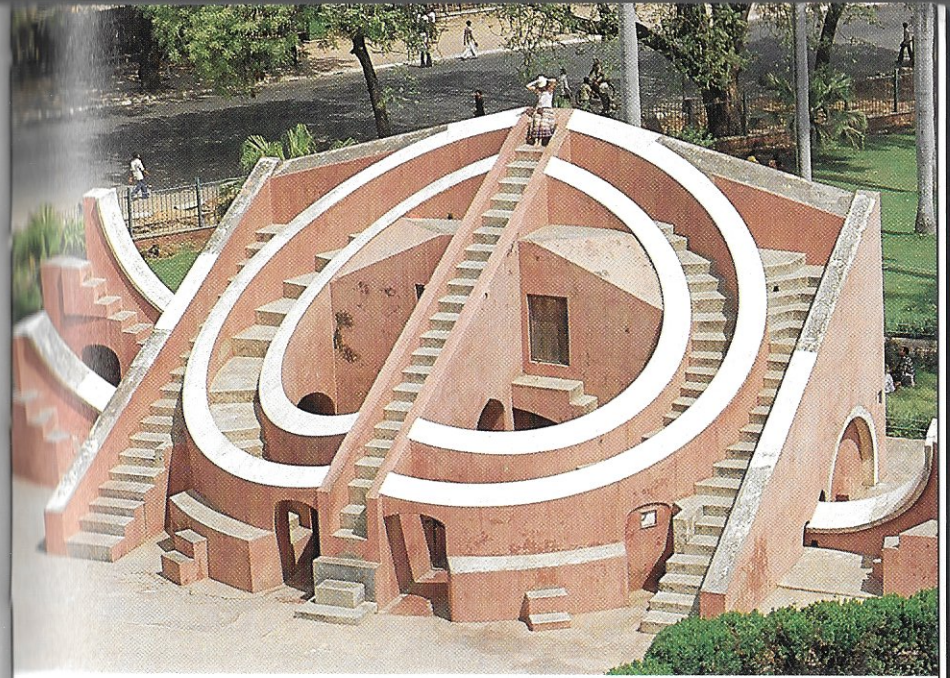


wires stretched across from north to south and east to west. The shadow of the inter-section of these wires on the concave surface of the hemispheres indicates the position of the sun. The surface of the hemispheres is marked with altitude and azimuth circles and the tropics and intermediate circles, so that the position of the sun can be read directly. There are also 'circles of the signs of the zodiac' so that the particular group of stars on the meridian is indicated by the position of the sun's shadow.

The cross wires of the Jai Prakash are no longer in position, though some of the pins to which they were fastened still exist. The diameter of the concave hemisphere is 8.35 metres.

To the north of the Samrat Yantra is situated the Misra Yantra or the Mixed Instruments. The Misra Yantra combines four instruments into one. The first of these, the Niyat Chakra, is in the middle and consists of a gnomon with two graduated semicircles on either side. These semicircles lie in planes inclined to the Delhi meridian. The Niyat Chakra includes the meridians at Greenwich, Zurich, Notkey (a village in Japan with an observatory) and Serichew (a town in the Pic Islands in the Pacific Ocean). The second instrument on either side of the Niyat Chakra and joined to it is half of an equinoctial dial constructed on the same principle as the Samrat Yantra. To the west is another quadrant, the face of which is horizontal instead of being parallel to the earth's axis. On the east wall of the building is the third instrument, a graduated semicircle called the Dakshinottara-bhitti Yantra, used for obtaining meridian altitudes. The north wall of the Misra Yantra is inclined to the vertical at an angle of 5 degrees and is marked with a large graduated circle to indicate the entry of the sun into the sign of Cancer. This is the fourth instrument and is called Karka-rasi-valaya or the Circle of the Sign of Cancer. The Misra Yantra, it is conjectured, is a later addition, the work of Madho Singh, Jai Singh's younger son, who inherited his father's interest in this particular field.

Jai Singh and his associates worked at the Delhi observatory for seven years, preparing tables of various star positions. He finally compiled a catalogue of 1018 star positions. His



The Misra Yantra.

observations stand good to this day and his catalogue is used by astronomers and astrologers alike to construct almanacs and predict celestial events. Jai Singh's catalogue of star positions finally travelled back to Samarkand where it was studied by scholars and formed the basis of further investigation.

Safdarjang's Tomb

Down the road from Humayun's tomb lies the mausoleum of Mirza Muqim Abul Mansur Khan, titled Safdarjang (1719–54), the Nawab or Governor of Oudh (present day Uttar Pradesh) under Emperor Muhammad Shah (1719–48) and Prime Minister under Emperor Ahmad Shah (1748–54). In the first half of the eighteenth century the Nawab of Oudh and the Nizam or Viceroy of Hyderabad, two powerful rulers made themselves practically autonomous, founding independent principalities though still paying lip-service to the Mughal emperor at Delhi.

The Nizam, 'the only really great and powerful man of the reign', was a generous and enlightened man. He established a line that ruled till the independence of the country in 1947. Safdarjang, on the other hand, though extremely lavish of money on his army, maintaining the best equipped and most highly trained contingent of troops in the empire, was a scheming and rapacious *wazir* to an incapable and powerless emperor. He would prove but one more nail in the coffin of the Mughal empire.

As the house of Babur declined rapidly after Aurangzeb, the rulers had few resources and little inclination to promote art, architecture or culture. It was the subjects who built and created, though sporadically. Safdarjang's tomb was built in 1754 by his son Shuja-ud-daula at a cost of three hundred thousand rupees, with material largely plundered from the nearby tomb of Abdur Rahim Khan-i-khanan, son of Akbar's regent.

Safdarjang's tomb is the last expression of the garden-tomb

OPPOSITE *Safdarjang's Tomb.*



pattern that began with Humayun's mausoleum. Fanshaw, that perceptive commentator on the architecture of Delhi, calls it 'one of the last great Mohammadan architectural efforts in India'. The tomb attempts to combine the general design of the Taj Mahal with details culled from Humayun's tomb, yet it is not as successful as either. Set within a large square garden with tanks and fountains along the central pathway and balanced by spacious pavilions on either side, it is often described as the 'last flicker in the lamp of Mughal architecture at Delhi'.

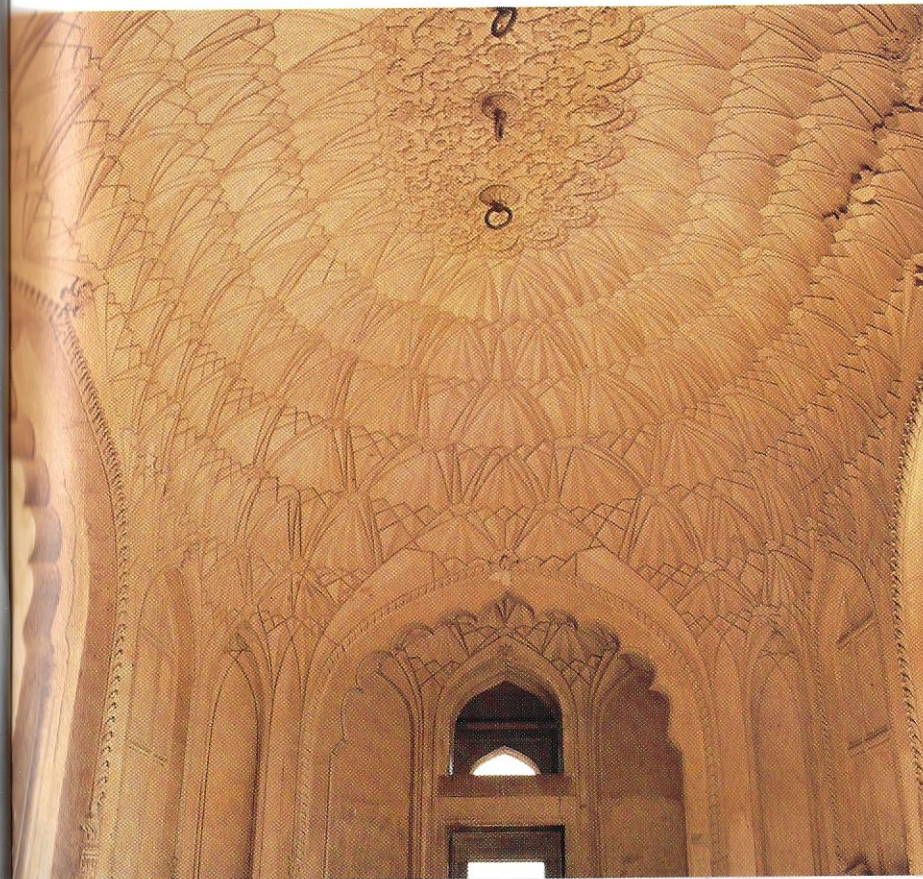
The high walls of the enclosure have recessed arches on the interior and water channels on the top to carry water to the different pavilions. There are four octagonal *chhattris* at the four corners, composed of red stonework *jaalis*. In the centre of the eastern wall is the main gateway, a massive double-storeyed structure with a warren of apartments, courts and corridors. A courtyard and a red sandstone mosque with three domes and three arched entrances are attached to it on the north. The mosque is a much later addition.

The building in the northern side of the enclosure is called the Moti Mahal (Pearl Palace) and overlooks the field where Timur fought and defeated the army of the last Tughluq ruler Mahmud Khan in 1398. The construction in the western wall is called the Jungli Mahal (Sylvan Palace) and the building in the south is named the Badshah Pasand (King's Favourite). The tomb itself is situated on a high terrace faced with arched openings leading to a series of cells on the inside. In the centre of this is a vault containing the unplastered mud graves of Safdarjang and his wife. The central chamber of the mausoleum is 6.1 metres square and contains a single highly polished and intricately carved cenotaph. It is unusual in that it has a head-rest, not seen in other tombs in Delhi. The ceiling of this chamber forms a round dome and has incised plaster-work on it. Four high *jharokhas* in the Bengal thatched-roof style provide glimpses of the plaster-work that adorns the ceilings of the apartments on the second floor. There are eight double-storeyed apartments around the central chamber, four rectangular and four octagonal. All have

shallow domed ceilings decorated with finely detailed incised plaster-work. Faint touches of colour can be seen in the central round panels of the ceilings in some apartments.

The building is topped with a bulbous marble dome on a sixteen-sided drum. Attached to the four corners of the mausoleum are four minarets, decorated with inlay work and crowned with *chhattris*. The four faces of the tomb, all alike, consist of high recessed and engrailed arches. Even though marred by over-ornamentation and disharmonious proportions, Safdarjang's tomb is more pleasing than it is generally allowed to be.

Plaster-work on the ceiling in the interior of Safdarjang's Tomb.



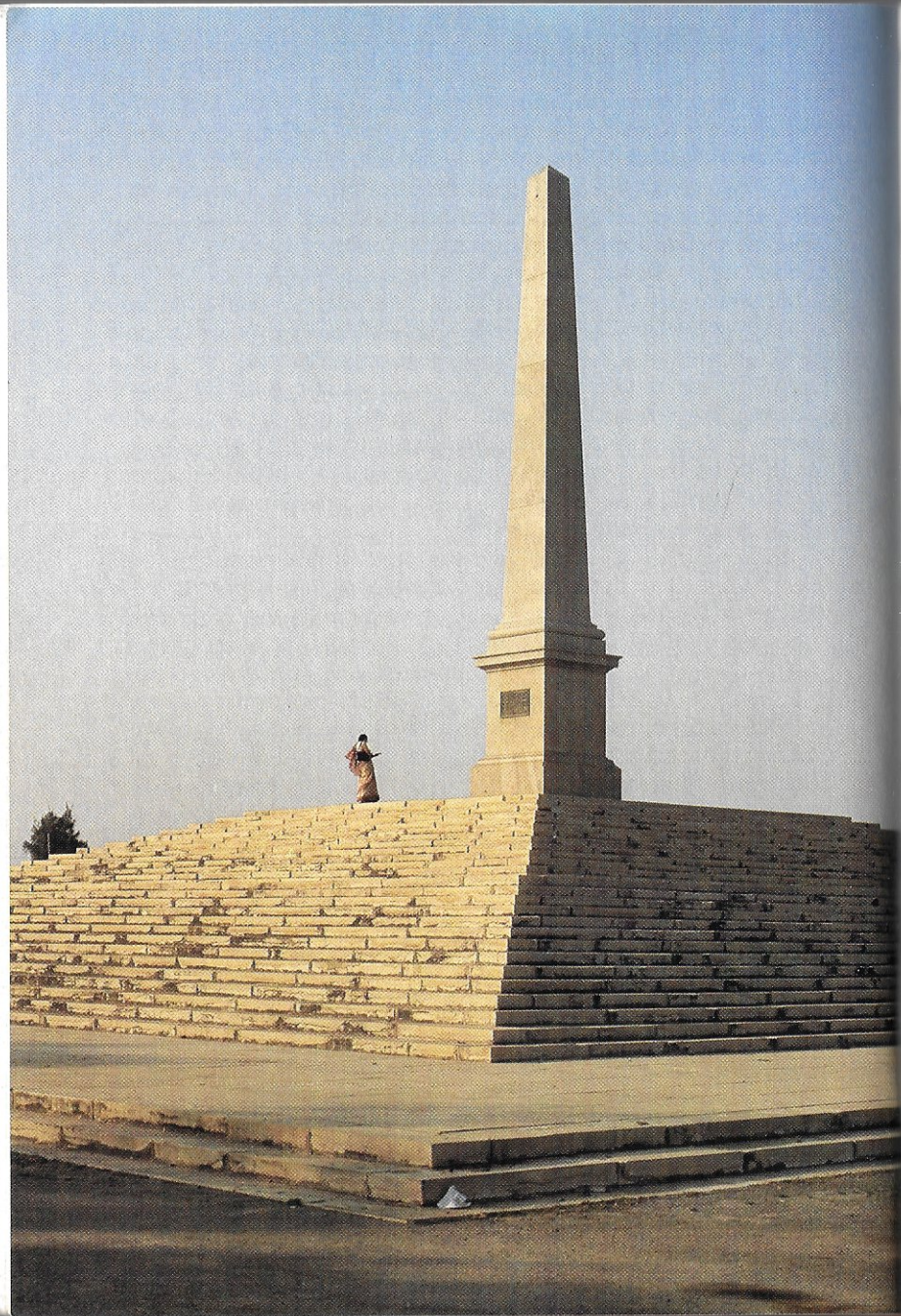
Lutyens' Delhi

The British first came to India in the seventeenth century, as merchants and traders, calling themselves the East India Company. By then the Portuguese had already been established in Goa and Bombay for a century while the Dutch and the French had staked their claims to Indian territories. At first the Mughals were not interested in trade with Europe, for it had hardly anything to offer except silver. As the British acquired naval superiority over the other Europeans, however, the Mughals were impressed and in 1612 granted them a permanent trading station at Surat, a port-town situated on the west coast of India. In 1640 the East India Company established a factory in Madras on the east coast. In 1674 they acquired Bombay, which had been gifted to Charles II as part of his dowry from the Portuguese Catherine of Braganza.

When Aurangzeb died in 1707, leaving behind seventeen sons, grandsons and greatgrandsons to squabble over their inheritance (the Mughals followed no clear and binding rule of succession), his empire sprawled over practically the entire subcontinent. And yet, as Aurangzeb himself realized, he had also sown the seeds of its dissolution. His overweening puritanism robbed the imperial person of majesty and grandeur and the imperial idea of reverence and authority. His suspicious nature and bigoted policies led to divisions among the people. His forceful personality held the empire together while he lived but immediately after him the decline started: foreign invaders marched in to seize what lands they could and former Mughal governors, dispossessed Hindu nobles and soldiers of fortune all founded independent principalities.

The upsurge of the Marathas in the west and the Jats and Sikhs in the north added to the confusion. The Rajputs, who had maintained an uneasy alliance with Aurangzeb while he lived, broke out into open revolt after him. Marauders like the Persian Nadir Shah and the Afghan Ahmad Shah Abdali sacked Delhi with impunity, robbing it of all its treasures, while the Mughal emperor watched helplessly. In the short span of a dozen years after Aurangzeb's death half a dozen effete Mughal emperors claimed the throne of Delhi and, except for Bahadur Shah I, Aurangzeb's eldest son, not one of them displayed the qualities of a ruler. By 1785 Shah Alam, the fifteenth Mughal to ascend the throne, had become dependent on the Marathas but when he realized that he had also become their prisoner, he turned to the British commander, General Lake, for deliverance and by 1803, the merchants had become virtual rulers of Delhi.

Henceforth, though he was no more than a pensioner of the British, the fiction of the Mughal emperor was maintained at Delhi for political and strategic reasons. It was in deference to his wishes that the British garrison was kept not at Delhi but at Meerut, 65 kilometres away. It was here that on 10 May 1857 the first shots of the Sepoy or the Indian Mutiny were fired against British rule. The mutineers, after killing their British officers, rode into Delhi the next day and declared the eighty-two-year-old but far from senile Bahadur Shah II the true emperor of Hindustan. Innumerable Europeans and Indian Christians were massacred in Delhi and their homes burnt down, though many were also given shelter and refuge by loyal Indian servants and villagers who risked their own lives to save those of the British. The revolt did not last long but it left deep scars on the British psyche. By September 1857 Delhi had been recaptured and once again terror was let loose on the city, this time in reprisal by the British. Gallows were set up in Chandni Chowk and Indians, innocent and guilty, were executed in large numbers every day. The Muslims had a particularly difficult time. In the eight months following the capture of Delhi 26,000 people had been killed and the city and the

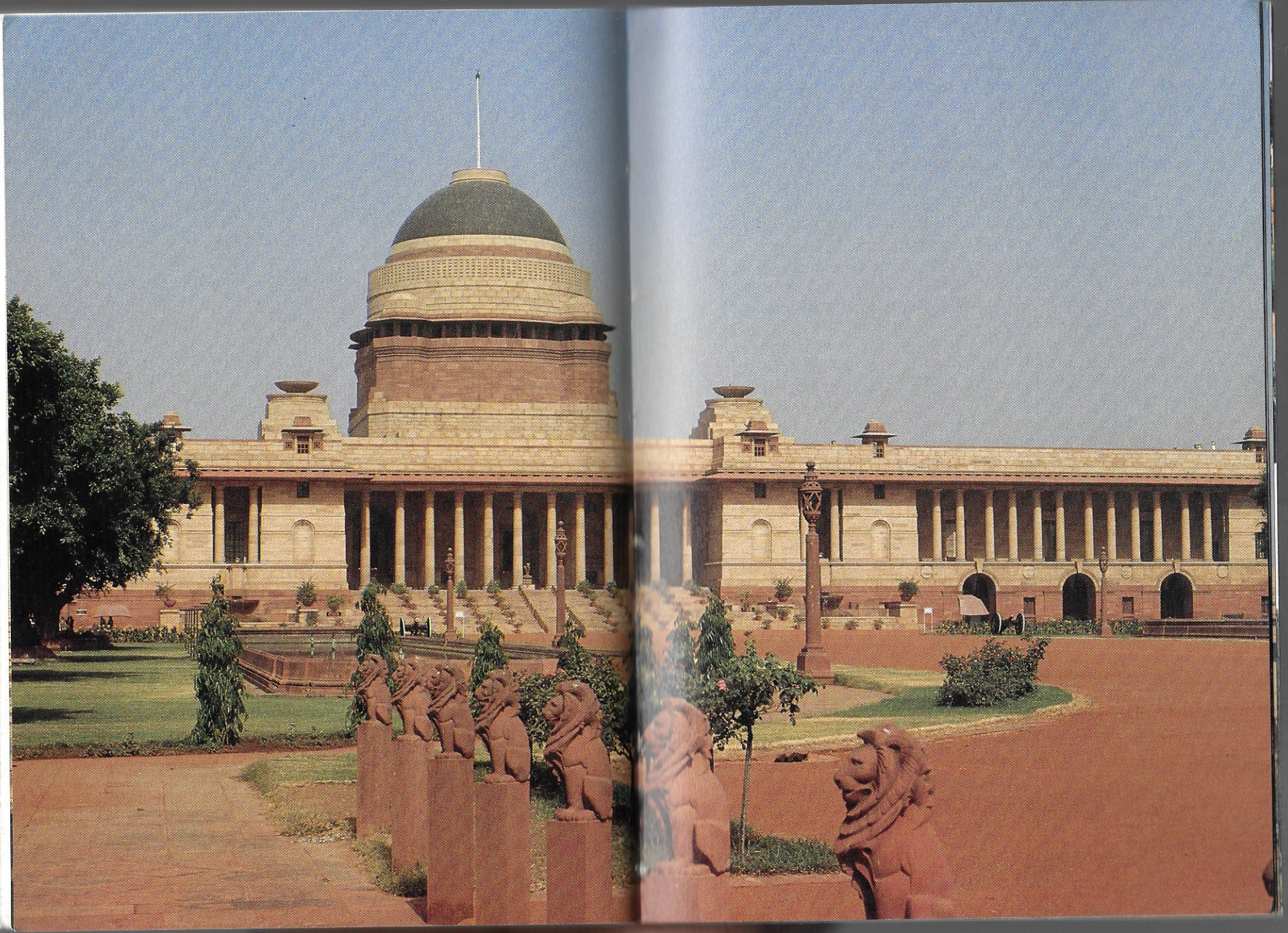


palace (Red Fort) ransacked. In 1858 the East India Company was dissolved and India became a part of the British empire governed by the Queen-Empress Victoria in London and administered by her Viceroy in Calcutta.

All this while, though Calcutta remained the headquarters of the government, Delhi kept its fascination for the British who longed to establish themselves in the tradition of the great rulers of India. Three dazzling durbars (courts) were held in Delhi, not Calcutta, between 1877 and 1911, to mark important occasions of state. In 1877 Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India. In 1903 the coronation of Edward VII was celebrated at an ostentatious durbar. In 1911, for the first time, a ruling English monarch came to India to be crowned Emperor and George V, as a boon or mark of special favour, announced that a completely new imperial city would be built at Delhi, replacing Calcutta as the capital of the Indian empire. Even though many practical reasons were advanced for the shifting of the capital it was primarily a symbolic gesture—very much as the durbars themselves had been—highly symbolic occasions meant to assert, more than anything else, the power and supremacy of the British.

The construction of an imperial city, a new Delhi, was started forthwith. Their Majesties, King George and Queen Mary, had laid the foundation stones of the new city at the site of the durbar in Coronation Park near Kingsway Camp. However, that site was subsequently found unsuitable for a 'well-planned city' for it had little scenic beauty and hardly any scope for expansion. The new Delhi, it was intended, 'should stand complete at its birth and yet have the power of receiving additions without losing its character.' After much deliberation and debate, at times quite acrimonious, Raisina Hill, a site south of Shahjahanabad, was chosen for the Viceroy's Palace or the Government House, as it was initially called (now Rashtrapati Bhawan, the official residence of the President of the Indian Republic). Sir Edwin Lutyens, well-known in

OPPOSITE Obelisk marking the site of the coronation of King George V.
OVERLEAF Britannic lions in the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhawan.



England as the designer of comfortable country houses, was chosen as the chief architect and Sir Herbert Baker, who had designed official buildings in South Africa, was to work with him. Lutyens was made responsible for the planning of the new city and the Viceregal Palace, to which were later added the All India War Memorial Arch (now India Gate) and the King George Memorial. Sir Herbert Baker designed the two Secretariat buildings which flank the Viceregal Palace, also called North Block and South Block, and later, the Legislative Assembly (now Parliament House).

The plan that Lutyens laid out for the new city was hexagonal in shape, keeping as his points of reference the Red Fort and the Purana Qila, both of which are ultimately linked to the Great Place (Vijay Chowk) by two wide avenues, Kingsway (Rajpath) and Queensway (Janpath). New Delhi is built around spacious and well-laid roads lined with rows of trees on either side, each street characterized by a different variety. Kingsway, the central avenue, 3.2 kilometres long and twice as wide as the Champs Elysees has, in addition, continuous canals of water on either side. All the chief landmarks (except for the Parliament House, which is tucked away in an off-road as an after-thought, which it was) are situated at central points, defining the shape of the new city.

Situated on an elevation, the Viceregal Palace was designed to be the focal point of the new city. Grouped around it are the Secretarial buildings and in a direct line from it are situated the All India War Memorial and the King George Memorial. A cluster of four buildings was planned at the main cross axis of Kingsway: an oriental institute, a national library and record office, an ethnological museum, and after 1918 a war museum and a medical research institute. Due to lack of funds, however, only the record office (now the National Archives) could come up. On subsidiary avenues, radiating from the Great Place, were situated the residences of those who assisted the Viceroy in his task of governance—arranged in a strictly hierarchical order—from the seven-bedroom bungalow of the Private Secretary to the

Viceroy to the single room tenements for 'menials'.

Before he began work on the Viceregal Palace Sir Edwin Lutyens, freshly arrived in India in 1912, was taken on a tour of selected cities to acquaint him with the architectural traditions of the country. There were many who felt that New Delhi should be built in the 'Indian style', including King George himself, who believed that 'the Mughal was the style to use, if it was not frightfully expensive', recommending strongly that Indian craftsmen and artists be employed. There were others who, like Lord Hardinge, then Viceroy, declared that 'a pure Eastern or pure Western architecture would be equally out of place... we have to find a blend'. Nearly everyone was agreed that the style employed should be both 'imperial' and 'Indian', for the matter of architectural style could hardly be separated from its political implications. The buildings of New Delhi had to reflect the grandeur and the might of the British without being so alien that Indians could not identify with them.

Lutyens was not impressed by Indian architecture. He thought Mughal architecture 'mere piffle' and Hindu buildings 'childish'. 'Personally I do not believe there is any real Indian architecture or any great tradition. There are just spurts by various mushroom dynasties with as much intellect as there is in any art nouveau', he declared. Yet, in spite of himself and his loud opinions, Lutyens achieved in his work in New Delhi a true and striking synthesis of the east and the west, something that had not been meaningfully managed by 200 years of British architecture in India. If the massive dome that surmounts the Viceregal Palace is derived from the Pantheon at Rome, it also recalls the Buddhist stupa at Sanchi. The pattern of the Sanchi railings has been incorporated into the white stone drum that supports the copper dome of the Government House and in the low walls that encircle the fountains at the Great Place on the north and south. The great colonnade on the east front of the Government House is reminiscent of classical architecture, while Mughal touches are evident in the 2.4 metre wide *chhajja* that juts out from below the drum, the *chhatris* that

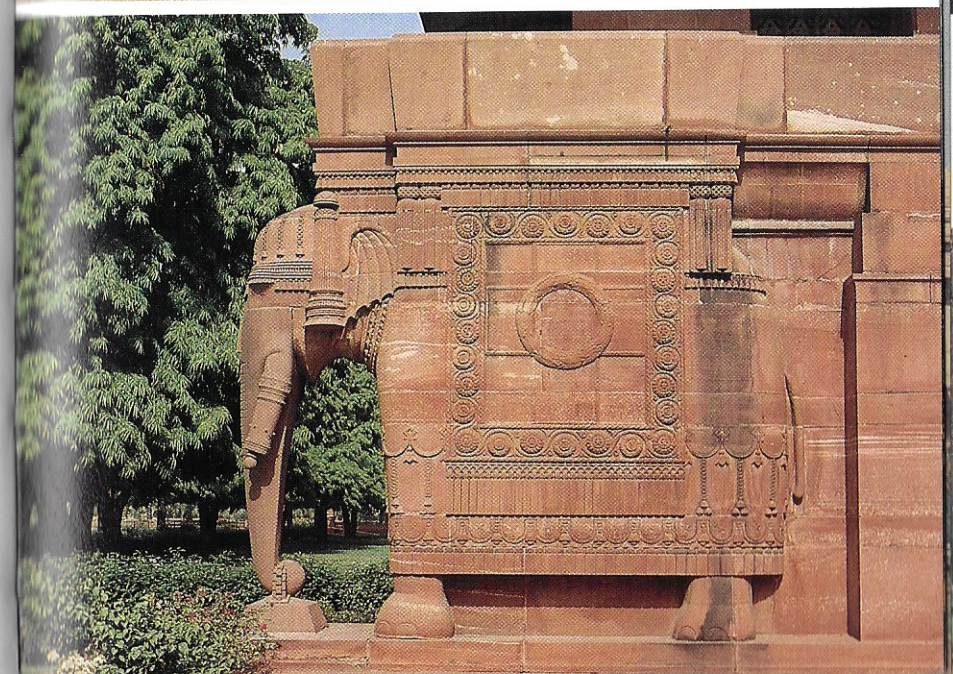
dot the roof and the fountains that permeate not only the gardens but the entire building and are perched also on the roof set within saucers, a shape that is a clever inversion of the dome. If the very English oak leaves are carved on the Jaipur Column very Indian elephants adorn the approach to the Viceroy's Court.

The Viceregal Palace is the last building to be built anywhere in the truly 'imperial' style. Conceived in essentially horizontal terms and built on many levels, it is august and imposing yet also supremely serene. The clever use of colour and laterally placed tiles disguise the fact that the mansion is four storeys high. The north and south wings, built without a plinth, seem to grow out of the earth itself. Instead, a different coloured stone is used to mark the lower storey as plinth.

The main entrance to the complex is guarded by an intricately fashioned wrought iron grille as well as buff sandstone elephants atop stone piers and colourful bodyguards set within stone aedicules. Between the gates and the mansion stretches the 350.5 metre long forecourt, lined with fountains, trees and rows of red sandstone Britannic lions guarding the lateral entrances. The lions and elephants have been designed by the sculptor Charles Sargeant Jagger. In the middle of the forecourt stands the 44 metre high Jaipur Column, gifted by the Maharaja of Jaipur Sawai Madho Singh, to whom originally belonged the land on which the entire complex has been built. Crowned with a six-pointed glass star sprouting from a bronze lotus, both of which together weigh five tons, the column displays remarkable elasticity for it has been observed that the tip of the star oscillates 12 to 15 centimetres to a beat of three seconds on windy days.

The mansion itself, larger than Versailles and yet a delightful mixture of country house and palace-fortress, stands on four and a half acres of land, with 340 rooms and 12 separate courtyards. It contains a circular Durbar Hall with a throne, a state dining room 30.5 metres long, a huge ballroom, three state drawing rooms and numerous state

OPPOSITE ABOVE *The Rashtrapati Bhawan with the Jaipur Column in the foreground, and BELOW Jagger's sculpted elephants.*



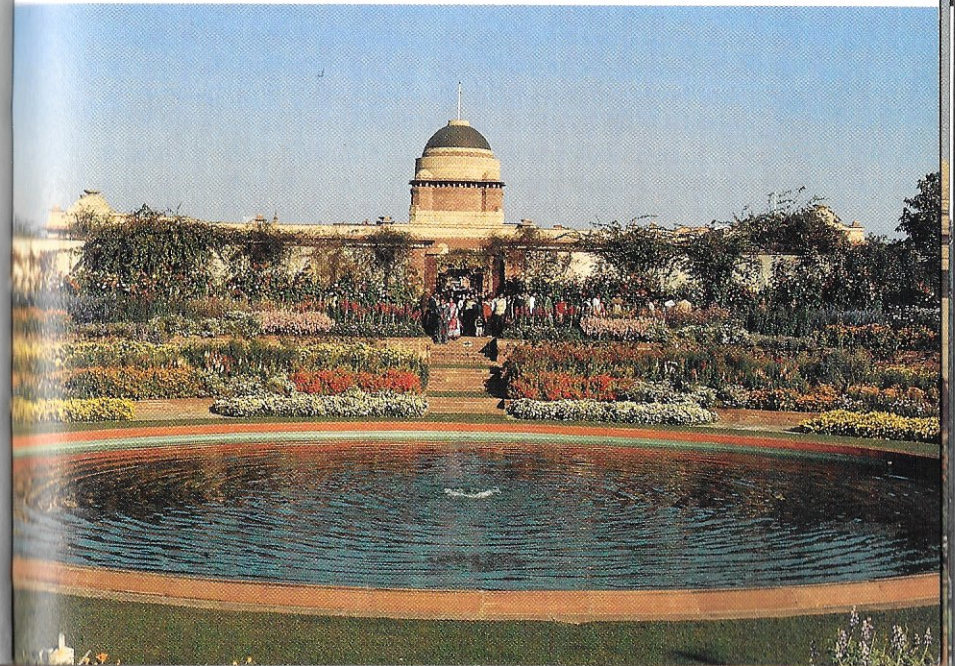
suites and great bedrooms, besides private quarters for the Viceroy and his family. Everything in them was designed by Lutyens, down to chairs, light fixtures and even door handles. The palace was also equipped with every kind of domestic office: a tent room, a tailor's shop, linen rooms, a bakery, sculleries and larders, a place to hang game and rooms to store the vast quantities of coal needed to heat the palace in winter. Its 15 acres of gardens included, besides others, a Mughal garden, a long garden and a butterfly garden. The Mughal garden was built on many levels, with numerous circular fountains made of sixteen to eighteen tiered lotus leaves carved from red sandstone. Beyond a line of circular stone-hoops lay a long rose garden with a red sandstone pergola in its centre. And the last in the sequence was a round garden built in tiers around a round pool. The gardens are open to the public from 26 January to the middle of March every year.

The compounds of the Viceregal estate had a swimming pool, squash courts, eight tennis courts, cricket grounds, a nine-hole golf course—all this besides housing innumerable secretaries, assistants, servants, 'menials', stables, two companies of British and Indian infantry and an army of bodyguards. Towards the end of British rule in India, in 1947, 2000 persons were needed to serve the Viceroy and look after the mansion, and the Viceregal Palace was home to 6000 persons, including families and dependents.

Though it bears little relation to the political or social reality of India—Nehru thought it smacked of 'vulgar ostentation and wasteful extravagance' and Gandhi called it a 'white elephant'—it cannot be denied that the Viceregal Palace is a work of inspired genius. However, asked constantly to chop and change, mainly for reasons of economy, Lutyens himself was not entirely satisfied with it. He would have liked to alter the dimensions of the dome that dominates the building, reducing the difference between the diameters of the stone railing and the hemisphere as well as the heights of the dome's plinth and drum. But he waged no relentless war to alter these as he did to alter the gradient of the road that led

to the Government House from the Great Place below. As the building of the Viceregal Palace and the Secretariats progressed it became evident that the Palace was situated too far back on Raisina Hill to be continuously visible to anyone coming from the Great Square below: it pops in and out of view as one approaches. This upset Lutyens very much for he had wanted that the Viceregal Palace occupy the highest point on Raisina and be the city's predominant feature. Originally the Secretariat blocks were to be set on the plain beneath so that the Palace could stand in solitary splendour. However, as Herbert Baker, who was designing the Secretariats, wanted them to share the hilltop with the Palace so that Viceroy and bureaucrat should stand as 'a united whole,' Lutyens moved his building further back to accommodate them, without realizing the difference it would make to the view. For six long years he fought to alter the incline of the road leading up to the Viceregal Palace but the prohibitive cost and Baker's reluctance to give up the

The butterfly garden in the Rashtrapati Bhawan.



Government Court, i.e. the open space between the two Secretariat buildings, thwarted him. Lutyens never forgave Baker for having spoilt his greatest work, saying that the gradient had turned out to be his 'Bakerloo'.

Baker's Secretariat buildings, though impressive and imposing, are rather conventional in their fusion of classical and Indian motifs. Conceived in essentially classical terms, they are replete with Indian touches like carved stone screens, sculpted elephants, and fountains, though these are not as well assimilated or creatively handled as by Lutyens in the Viceregal Palace. Three storeys high and nearly half a kilometre long, the Secretariats also look much smaller than they actually are, unless viewed from a distance. To appreciate the size of the Viceregal Palace one has to actually be within its shadow but Baker's buildings do not disclose their true size until one is far away from them.

Each block has a high dome in the centre, derived from St Paul's Cathedral in London, adorned with carved *jaalis*, *chhattris* and stone elephants. At their eastern ends the Secretariat blocks have a pair of stunted towers that Baker intended should express the majesty of the British empire but which in fact symbolize more its indecision and frugality. Only half as high as originally designed, they had to be reduced because the cost of construction was becoming higher than budgeted for. Beneath the towers run flights of steps 9.1 metres wide and within arches beneath the stairs are recorded the names of the principal architects and engineers involved in the construction of New Delhi.

Each block of the Secretariats is designed differently, though the exteriors with huge colonnades, numerous *chhattris* and Mughal balustrades are identical. The highlight of the North Block is a high-domed octagonal hall faced with marble and decorated with carved stone *jaalis* and Indian heraldic devices. The South Block, also the office of the Indian Prime Minister now, is an intricate labyrinth of vaulted staircases leading to an imposing domed conference room flanked by libraries and reception rooms. Seven rooms in the Secretarial blocks have been decorated with murals by

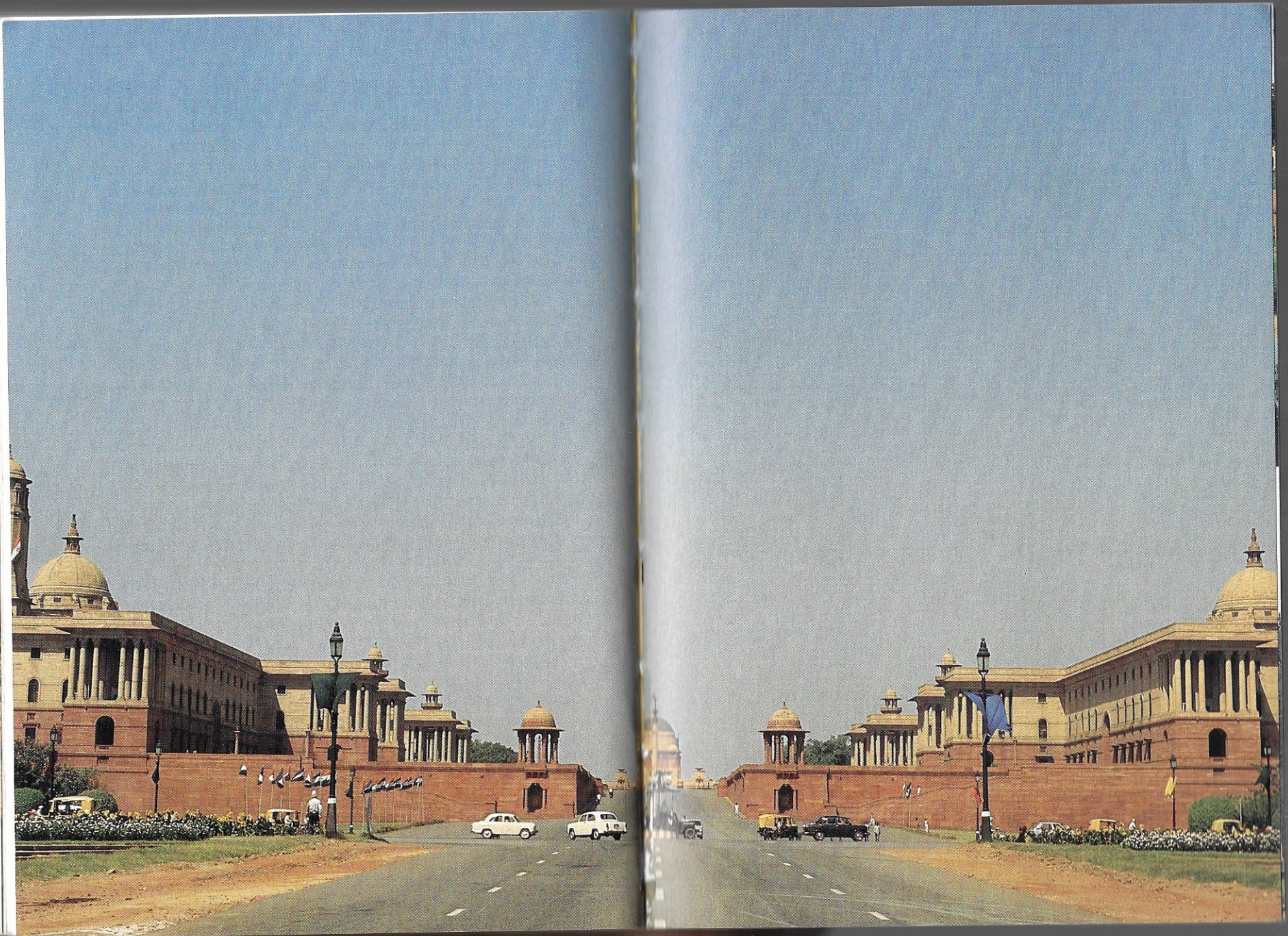
Indian artists. Two domes in the North Block have murals executed by S. Fyzee Rahamin in the style of the cave paintings at Ajanta and Bagh, while G.H. Nagarkar has decorated the Princes' Waiting Room in the South Block.

In front of the Secretariats lies the Government Court, adorned with four tall Dominion Columns, the gifts of the Dominions of Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand to India. The national flower and the arms of each Dominion are carved on the pedestal while the name of the Dominion and the year is carved on the column itself. Each column is also surmounted by a full-rigged bronze ship sailing east, symbolizing Britain's mastery of the seas.

Inscribed on the facade of the North Block is the legend 'Liberty Does Not Descend To A People. A People Must Raise Themselves To Liberty. It Is A Blessing That Must Be Earned Before It Can Be Enjoyed.' On the South Block is a quotation from Queen Victoria's Proclamation in 1858: 'In Their Prosperity Will Be Our Strength, In Their Contentment Our Security, And In Their Gratitude Our Best Reward.' Both chosen by Baker, they were rather condescending and anachronistic even in 1925, a mere twenty-seven years before India shook off foreign domination.

Further east from the Secretariat buildings lies the All India War Memorial Arch, now known as the India Gate. Designed by Lutyens and completed in 1931, ten years after the Duke of Connaught had laid its foundation stone, it is a commemorative arch in the tradition of the Arc de Triomphe de l'etiole in Paris, the Marble Arch and the Wellington Monument in London. India Gate honours the 60,000 Indians who died in the First World War. On the arch itself are inscribed the names of the 13, 516 British and Indian officers who died in the NorthWest Frontier and the Third Afghan War. More recently it has also become the memorial to the Unknown Soldier. The eternal flame that burns beneath the arch and the helmet on the inverted bayonet were put up after the war waged by Indian soldiers for the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971.

OVERLEAF Lutyens' 'Bakerloo'—the gradient.



India Gate is 42.3 metres high, with its main arch 9.1 metres wide and 22.8 metres high. Seven small abatements between the base and the frieze add height, while simple representations of the solar orb beneath the bold cornice add detail to the simply conceived symmetry of the monument. Beneath the north and south arches stand huge pine cones set in giant urns. At the summit is a low dome with an oculus reminiscent of the dome of the Rashtrapati Bhawan. Lutyens intended having a pillar of flame in it by night and a column of smoke by day, but economic considerations undercut these symbolic flourishes.

Although by January 1930, the Viceregal Palace had already received its first occupant, the Viceroy Lord Irwin, the city of New Delhi was inaugurated only in February 1931 during a fortnight full of ceremonies and celebrations. The festivities, which included the investiture of Lord Irwin on 12 February, were so grand that Bishop Gore, a close friend of the Viceroy, was constrained to remark, 'When I get home I shall suggest that Edward Irwin be impeached for exceeding the King in grandeur!'

In 1936, when King George V died, it was only fitting that a monument should be put up for him at New Delhi in the planning and building of which he had taken such keen interest. Lutyens designed a simple but striking monument, 152 metres east of the India Gate. A white marble figure of the King-Emperor sculpted by Jagger was set on a tall pedestal beneath a canopy and placed within a round basin in a rectangular pool. Round scalloped basins and giant nautilus shells overflow with water at the base, giving an extra dimension to the monument, which is conceived vertically, emphasizing height, unlike the India Gate and the Rashtrapati Bhawan which, despite their height, emphasize mass. After Independence the statue, considered a symbol of India's colonial past, was removed and an attempt was made to replace it with a statue of Mahatma Gandhi. However, the man who refused to be glamorized when alive

OPPOSITE ABOVE *The North Block of the Secretariat, and* BELOW *the Parliament House.*



looked so uncomfortable perched on the King's pedestal that he had to be taken off immediately. A second attempt to enthrone him is now on. Whether it will succeed any better is still to be seen.

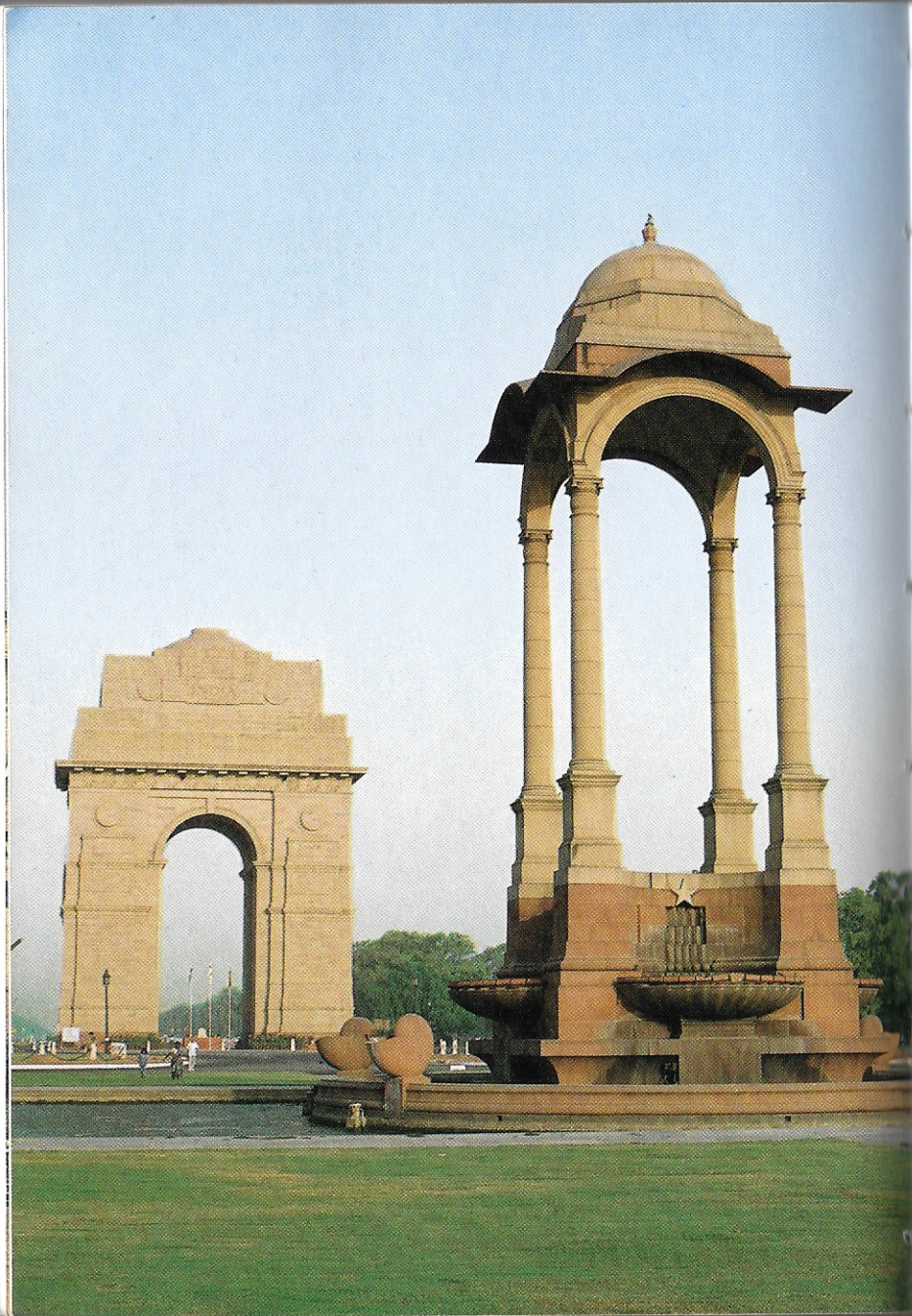
Besides these major monuments, Lutyens also designed the palaces of two Indian princes out of the ten who had been allotted plots of land in the new capital—Baroda House and Hyderabad House. Built for the Gaekwar of Baroda and the Nizam of Hyderabad, two of the richest princes in the land, both houses betray the unmistakable Lutyens touch. Derived from the Rashtrapati Bhawan they echo it in many details without being slavish imitations.

Even though Lutyens and Baker managed to build most of New Delhi as though the old order would never change, the one building that bears definite scars of the fluid social and political conditions of the times is the Parliament House. At first it had been thought that a Council Chamber in the Viceroy's Palace would serve the purpose and Lutyens was asked to provide for it. By 1917, however, the Secretary of State was already asking Lutyens to omit the Imperial Legislative Council Chamber from plans of the Government House and provide space for it in the new Secretariats. As Indian nationalism became more strident, however, and the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were enacted in 1919, a separate building to function as the Legislative Assembly became imperative. Since no provision had been made for it in the original city plans, a suitable location became hard to find as all the major avenues had already been provided for. Finally the Legislative Assembly had to be sited on a tangential road, away from the main ceremonial axis and the Great Square.

The allotted site, situated directly north-east of the Secretariats, formed a large equilateral triangle, spread over more than five acres of land. Baker first designed an impressive structure with a high central dome that seemed to rise from the base, with three wings radiating from it, each of

OPPOSITE *The statue of King George V which once stood within the King George Memorial.*



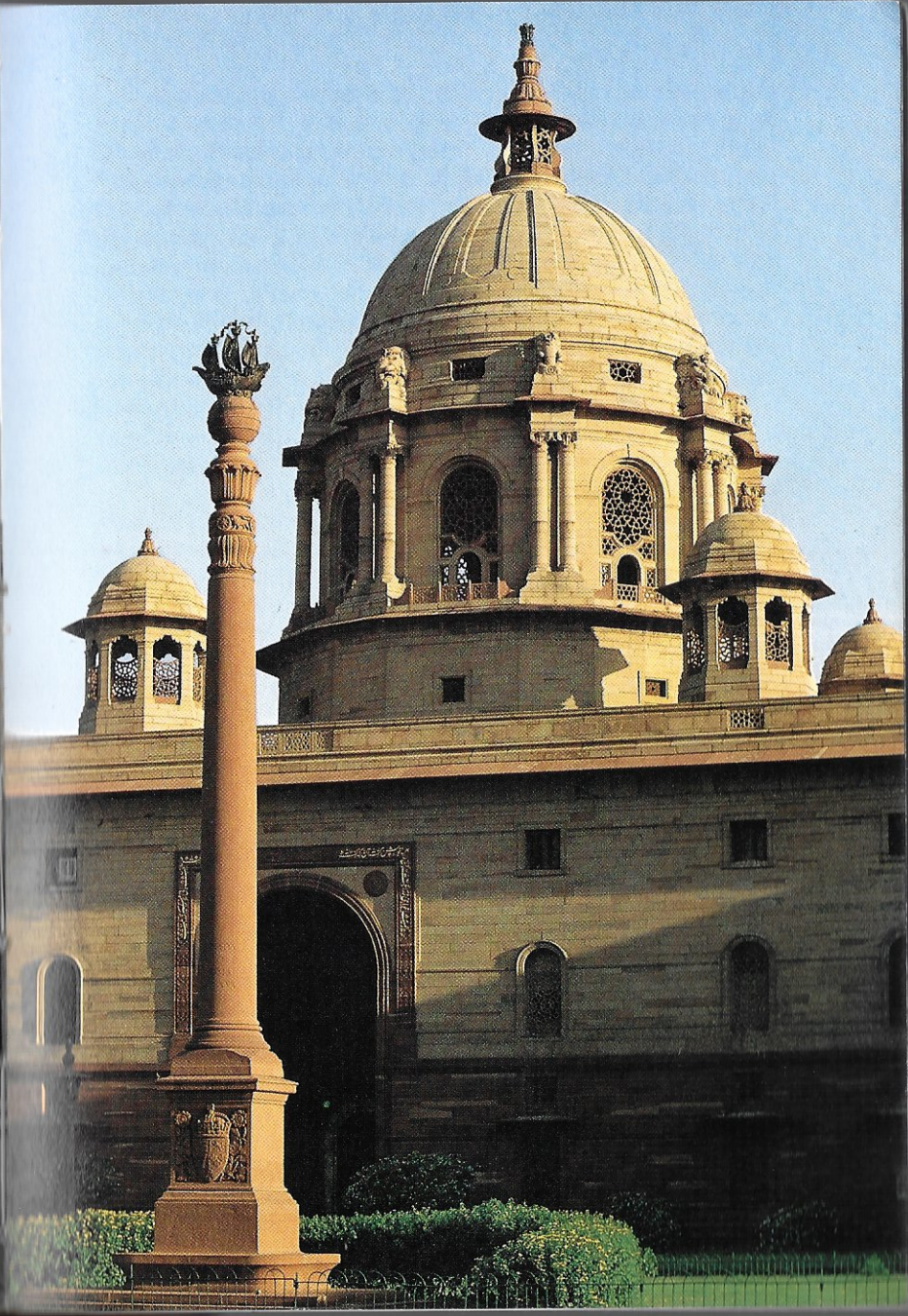
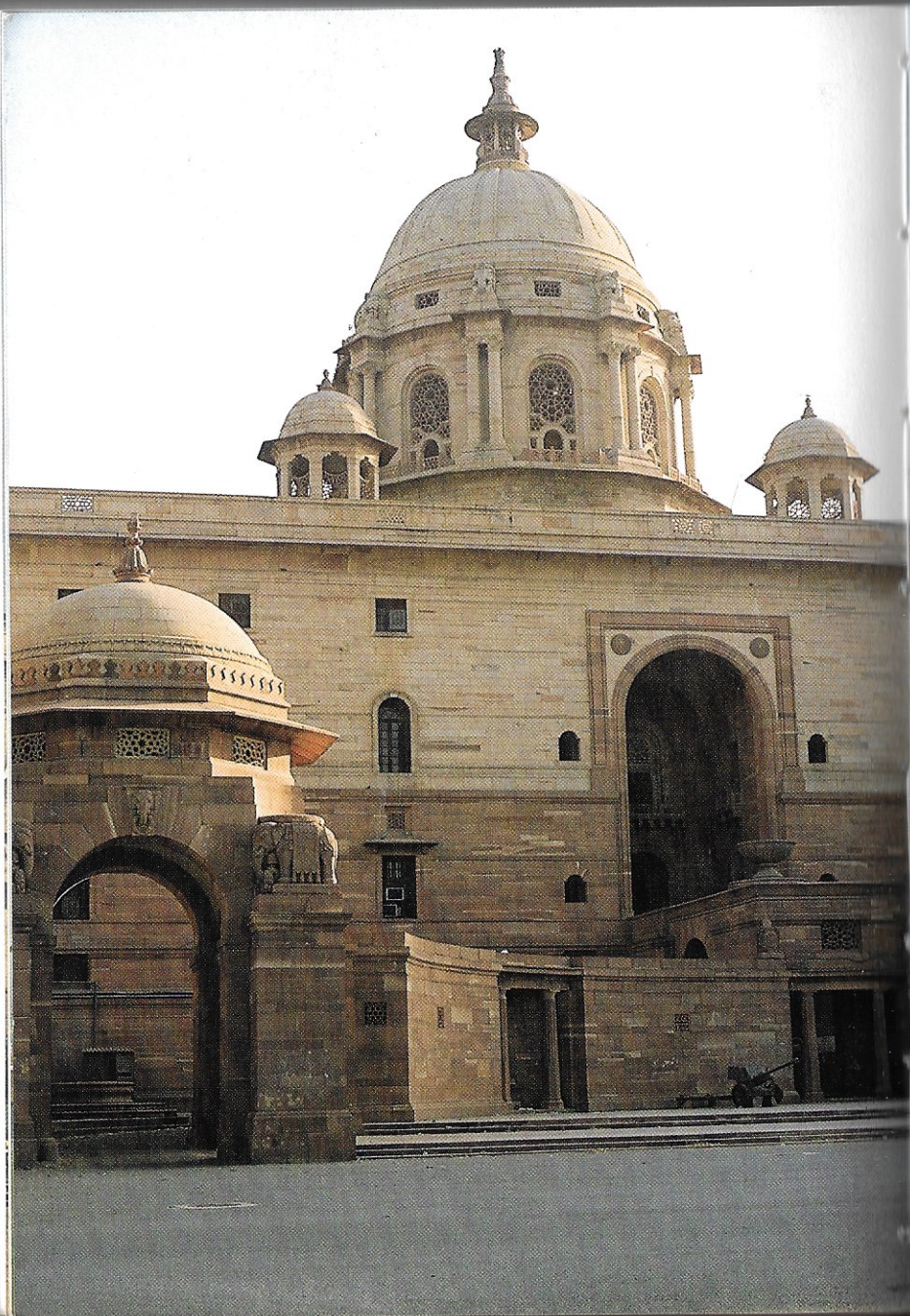


which contained a council chamber. Lutyens, by now barely on speaking terms with Baker, was quick to denounce it as too fussy and intricate, something of which 'neither God nor Michaelangelo' could make sense. He proposed instead a circular design. Baker was not happy with it, but since Lutyens was a formidable opponent he had to give in. He then designed a circular building with three chambers placed at an angle of 120 degrees to each other and linked to a low domed circular hall in the centre. The building attracted criticism from the start and was variously described as a 'merrie-go-round' (by Baker himself), a gasometer or bull-ring, and even as a 'dreary-go-round'.

In diameter 171 metres and larger than the Rashtrapati Bhawan, the Parliament House has passages running three-quarters of a kilometre in length. Built on three levels, it has a red sandstone foundation storey, a buff-coloured middle storey ringed with 144 pillars, and a small attic storey added in 1929 (two years after the inauguration of the Parliament by Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy) to accommodate clerical staff and built in plaster to save on time and money. The attic storey further obscures the low dome of the central hall creating, as Baker himself observed, a 'Jack-in-the-box' effect as the dome slowly disappears from view on approach.

Within, the building consists of offices, gardens and a domed library and reading room in the centre. The three chambers were originally the Legislative Council, the Council of State and the Council of Princes. If required, the Viceroy could assemble all three chambers in the central hall. Baker hoped that the central dome could 'thus express the essential unity of the three estates of all India'. Three open courts with flowers and fountains separate the three chambers. Acoustics presented a special problem because of the semi-circular form and the size of the chambers. Specially imported acoustic tiles (from America) were used on the walls and sound-absorbing plaster on the ceiling. Today the Sansad Bhawan, as it is now called, houses the Rajya Sabha (the Upper House) and the Lok Sabha (the Lower House),

OPPOSITE *India Gate with the King George Memorial in the foreground.*



ministerial offices and numerous committee rooms as well as an excellent library.

While Lutyens and Baker were responsible for the grander projects, R. T. Russell, Chief Architect to the Government of India, was the man who designed the not-so-spectacular but equally essential government buildings that make up the bulk of New Delhi. He designed 4000 single-storeyed residences for government employees, hospitals, post-offices, police stations, the civil airport at Safdarjung, two hostels for Members of Parliament (Eastern and Western Courts) and Flagstaff House, originally meant for the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces but later the residence of the first Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Renamed Teen Murti House, it has now been turned into a museum dedicated to Nehru and has a library attached to it.

One of the more important projects undertaken by Russell was the designing of a central plaza not far from Raisina which would be the commercial centre of the new city. It would have shops, hotels, commercial establishments, municipal and local administrative offices as well as a major railway terminus and a general post-office. The last two, however, had to be shifted further off for lack of space.

Named as the Connaught Place after the Duke of Connaught, uncle of King George V, who had visited India in 1921, a circular plaza 335 metres in diameter, with seven colonnaded sections and intercut by seven radial roads was designed by Russell, based on a plan originally suggested by W.H. Nicholls, Architect to the Delhi Town Planning Committee. Built round a central park, double-storeyed and ringed with tall stuccoed columns and punctuated with Palladian archways, it has rows of shops in three concentric circles: the inner circle, called Connaught Place, the middle circle and the outer circle, called Connaught Circus. Though private enterprise, which was to provide the funds for this plaza, was slow in coming, Connaught Place soon became a flourishing shopping centre with some of Delhi's most fashionable and expensive shops in it. Many new shopping centres have sprung up all over Delhi since, but it is difficult to match the

aura of Connaught Place. Today, barely fifty-five years after it was completed, the once too-wide avenues of Connaught Place are already choked with traffic. The entire area, in fact, is in danger of being submerged by the tall skyscrapers and the ostentatious hotel-palaces that overshadow it.

BELOW *An aerial view of the Connaught Place, and OVERLEAF President's ceremonial bodyguard in front of a stone aedicule.*



