



# Delhi's Imperial Past: A study of the influence of Mughal and British Colonial Architecture on City's Identity

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## Abstract:

The Indo-Islamic-Persian style was the distinguished and chief characteristic feature of the Mughal architecture, which flourished on the Indian subcontinent during the reign of the Mughal Empire (1526–1857). This new style was a result of a combination of elements of Islamic art and architecture, which were introduced to India by the Delhi Sultanate (1192–1398) and had produced great monuments such as the Qutub Minar, which consist of the features of Persian art and architecture. Rolling vines and flowers, jewels, and crowns in greens, blues, and gold embellish Mughal buildings. The main aim of this paper is to describe the beauty of Mughal Architecture and effect of british era which enriched the field of architecture in India.

Key Words: Mugal architecture, British architecture, Mughal empire

## Introduction:

The year 1911 marked an important point in the history of Britain's rule over India. It was when the colonial state took the important decision to shift the capital from Calcutta to Delhi, a move that was seen as "a bold stroke of statesmanship". The move to Delhi and the creation there of a new imperial capital city was designed to place the British Empire at the end of the long line of empires that had ruled from this historic city. It was pointed out that if one stood on the rocky eminence known as Raisina Hill and looked eastwards towards the Yamuna, from left to right in one sweep, one could see the seventeenth-century city of Shahjahanabad, the fourteenth-century city of Firozabad, the fifteenth century fortress known as Purana Qila, which was believed to be the site of the ancient city of Indraprastha; the massive fourteenth-century fortress of Tughlaqabad; the cities of Jahanpanah and Siri, also of the fourteenth century; and finally the oldest extant Delhi – the eleventh-century fortress of Lal Kot/Qila Rai Pithora. For the British, an interesting aspect of the problem of identifying a site as Delhi was the issue of the name itself. Even as the city of New Delhi was being planned, it had been pointed out by an old Indian hand that the spelling commonly used by the British, 'Delhi,' and its consequent pronunciation was wrong. The correct form was Dilli or Dehli. The government decided that it would continue to use Delhi, not only because there seemed to be no great public opinion against it but also because having to make a choice between Dilli and Dehli might lead to controversy. This was because it was felt that though Persian writers invariably spelled it as Dehli, the older Indian texts and inscriptions spelled it Dilli. It was assumed that the former was a 'Muslim' preference and the latter a 'Hindu' one.

**Research Objectives:** In the present study, the main focus of the researcher was to collect information about the effect of the influence of Mughal and British Colonial Architecture on Delhi city's Identity. This researcher analyzed the effect of Mughal and European architecture and its impact and also how the Indian style of architecture affects and mix well with both of these style and their historical importance. Mughal Architecture in Delhi:

## **Foundation of Mughal Empire:**

### **Babur, the first Mughal Emperor:**

In Arabic and Persian, Mughal means Mangol or Mangolian. The Chagatai Turkic prince, Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, was the founder of the Mughal Empire. He was born in Central Asia in 1483 into the ruling family of the small kingdom of Fargana. Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodi, sultan of Delhi, in 1526 in the first battle of Panipat, after which he imposed his rule on most of Northern India. By the time of his death in 1530, he had conquered all of Hindustan and established an empire that extended from the Deccan to Turkestan. As Babur was aggressive and keener about expanding his territory, he did not concentrate on constructing buildings and monuments of architectural value. However, he indeed paved the way for an empire that became famous for its architecture.

### **Humayun, the second Mughal Emperor (Humayun's Tomb, Delhi):**

After Babur had died in 1530, his son Humayun, at the age of 23, took the throne. He soon found himself busy in fighting his enemies on two widely separated fronts. Thus, Humayun's tenure is marked by aggressive fighting throughout his life. A heterogeneous picture of Mughal architecture prevailed during the reign of Humayun, which lasted up to the middle of the sixteenth century. The Timurid style can be seen in almost pure imports, such as the mosque at Kachpura, Agra.

### **Akbar, The Great:**

After the death of his father, Humayun, Akbar acquired the throne in 1556 when he was at the age of 13. During his reign, Akbar managed to restrain almost all parts of India, with some areas becoming tributary states. Akbar practiced tolerance, and he aimed at the unification of Hindu-Muslim through the introduction of a new religion called Din-i-Ilahi. Akbar became ill and died of slow poisoning on October 27, 1605. Mughal architecture started gaining importance during the rule of Akbar. He built extremely, and the style was exceptional. Most of Akbar's buildings are built with red sandstone, spared at times through marble inlay. Fatehpur Sikri, located 26 miles west of Agra, was constructed in the late 1500s and became evidence of the era of his royal heritage. In Gujarat and many other places, the presence of a style that is a mixture of Muslim and Hindu characteristic features of architecture can be found. The great mosque is one such embodiment of architectural brilliance, which can be unmatched in elegance and grandeur. The Tomb of Akbar's father, Humayun Akbar's tomb at Sikandra, is another example of the finest works of architectural magnificence that highlight Mughal architecture. The tomb placed in a garden in Delhi has a complex ground plan with octagonal chambers at the center, which is joined by an elegant facade archway surmounted by cupolas and kiosks.

### **Nur-ud-din Jahangir:**

Prince Salim, who was the only surviving son of Akbar, succeeded to the throne on November 3, 1605, under the title of Jahangir, and he ruled India till his death on Oct 28, 1627. Scholars of India and the West have praised this period as the age of Mughal splendor. Jahangir encouraged paintings of events and incidents that occurred in his own life rather than illustrated fiction.

Jahangir, who resided in Lahore, built less compared to his predecessors but brought significant change from sandstone to marble in his monuments of architecture. It was during the reign of Jahangir from 1605- 1627 that there was a decline in the Hindu influence on Mughal architecture. Jahangir's style was more Persian, like his great mosque at Lahore. Akbar's mausoleum was built during his rule. Jahangir played an exceptional role in the development of the Mughal garden. "Verinag" and "Chashma-Shahi" are beautiful gardens built by Jahangir. The Gardens of Shalimar and other pavilions on the shore of Kashmir's Dal lake were also built by him. The extreme use of white marble as a material was one of the striking features of Jahangir's time.

### **Shah Jahan, the Architect King:**

The reign of Shah Jahan, which lasted from his accession of the throne on Feb 6, 1628, to 1658, is considered as the period of the greatest splendor of the Greatest Mughals. It was Shah Jahan who gave perfection to the

Mughal architecture. Shah Jahan began a series of unbelievable, splendid, and monumental architectural projects in Dehli. The city itself was surrounded by a wall of sixty feet. In the middle of the city he built for himself a magnificent palace along with the buildings that were associated with imperial administration within the Red Fort. Besides the buildings, he built for himself an extraordinary throne, the Peacock Throne, made of gold and covered in rare jewels, which would cost over five million dollars. Mughal architecture acquired perfection in the construction of the Jama Masjid of Delhi during the rule of Shah Jahan. The Moti Masjid, which was built during his rule, is another beautiful creation and reminiscent of the style that was eminent in Mughal era. Shah Jahan's most famous building project was the Taj Mahal in Agra. With the amalgamation of both Persian and Indian architectural styles, the tomb and the grounds brought the Muslim idea of Paradise into reality.

### **Aurangzeb Alamgir:**

When Emperor Shah Jahan fell severely ill at the end of September 1657, it became a signal for a struggle for succession to break out among his four sons—Dara Shiko, Suja, Aurangzeb, and Murad. Aurangzeb was the third son of Shah Jahan, and he was born on October 24, 1618. He ascended the throne on 21st July, 1658. During the reign of the orthodox Aurangazib, there was a decline in the arts. In this period, the Mughal academy was dispersed. Many artists then started joining Rajput courts, where their influence on Hindu painting is clearly evident. The famous Badshahi Mosque was built by Aurangzeb and had the most huge praying area in the world till the construction of the Faisal Mosque in Islamabad in the late twentieth century. After the death of Aurangzeb, a war of succession broke out among his four sons that ultimately resulted the decline of the empire.

### **Treatment of flowers and nature in Mughal architecture:**

By the seventeenth century, a predominantly floral decorative vocabulary had established itself as a mainstream ornament in the arts of the great empire of the Mughals. Flower and plant decoration occupied the place of the previously favored "typical Islamic" geometrical patterns. The naturalistic flower representations of the Taj Mahal bring the involvement of the Mughals with plants and botanical studies to its monumental pinnacle. The founder of the dynasty, Babur, expressed his interest in nature in detailed descriptions of plants, trees, and animals, which he saw on his peregrinations in his native Central Asia and during his conquest of India. The most beautiful example of Mughal architecture is the Taj Mahal, and the white-marbled mausoleum and Humayun's tomb are examples of the combination of Mughal architecture and Persian architecture that enriched the beauty in the field of architecture in India.

### **British Colonial Architecture in Delhi:**

In the initial phase of British rule in India, Calcutta, more specifically Fort William, was seen as the seat of colonial power and authority. The earliest governors-general aimed to distance themselves from the Mughals or established symbols of power in India to show Colonial supremacy. It was only after the rise of the call for the Swadeshi movement, along with unfit climatic conditions and the need to strengthen the colonial empire in the immediate aftermath of the revolt of 1857 that the capital was formally shifted back to Delhi after the Delhi Durbar of 1911. It was at the Delhi Durbar of 1911 that the formal proclamation of the shift was made, pursuing which a team of architects was selected to build the new imperial capital. Of this team, there were three important members: Edwin Lutyens, Hebert Baker, and Henry Vaughan Lanchester. Of these three, it was Baker and Lutyen who planned and executed the city center.

### **Lutyen and Baker's Vision:**

Lutyen and Baker chose the region of Raisina Hill along with the then Viceroy Hardinge as Hardinge. Raisina was the figurative center of all the cities of Delhi. The capital was planned as a Winter capital, while the summer capital remained the city of Shimla. Primarily, there are two parts to the city of New Delhi one is the area of the Rashtrapati Bhawan, North Block, South Block, and Connaught Place. The second part of Lutyens Delhi is the area of Lodhi Road, Teenmurti, and surrounding areas that are now associated with the government and the seat of power. Therefore, there are primarily three architectural Marvels and their influences on them. Firstly, at the center of Raisina Hill is the imposing Rashtrapati Bhawan, known at the time as the Statehouse or the Viceregal Palace. It is the largest in scale and was built based on the golden ratio. In the buildings of Edwin Lutyen, there are four noticeable influences. These are: firstly, the classical Influence, which is the oldest form of European architecture that can be seen in the region of Italy and Greece. It is based primarily on the beauty and grace of columns and arches. The Indian element of the construction is



the Cream and red sandstone, while the architecture, with the extensive use of columns and high domes, is seen as a fusion of classical and Renaissance European architecture. The architecture of Connaught Place was built as a center for colonial recreation for the ordinary masses; it was built in the shape of two Roman-style forums or arcades similar to the Horniman circle built in Bombay. Architecturally speaking, this part of Lutyens's Delhi is most similar to the Georgian element of architecture in terms of the rooftops and forum structure similar to the city of Bath. In conclusion, it can be said that the British have left a distinct imprint on the architecture and culture of India. However, the neighborhoods they left behind are today the bustling centers of post-colonial India; they symbolize aspirations and hopes that are reflected in post-colonial art and architecture.

## Conclusion:

Delhi is the capital of modern India. Although it has been a capital for over 1,000 years, it has some gaps. As many as 14 capital cities were founded in a small area of about 60 square miles on the left bank of the river Jamuna. The remains of all other capitals may be seen on a visit to the modern city-state of Delhi. Of these, the most important are the capital cities built between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries. Shah Jahan built the most splendid capital of all. Shahjahanabad was begun in 1639 and consisted of a fort-palace complex and the city adjoining it. Lal Qila, or the Red Fort, made of red sandstone, contained the palace complex. To its west lay the Walled City with 14 gates. The main streets of Chandni Chowk and Faiz Bazaar were broad enough for royal processions to pass. A canal ran down the center of Chandni Chowk. Set amidst densely packed mohallas and several dozen bazaars, the Jama Masjid was among the grandest mosques in India. There was no place the largest or than this mosque within the city then. In 1803, the British gained control of Delhi after defeating the Marathas. Since the capital of British India was Calcutta, the Mughal emperor was allowed to continue living in the palace complex in the Red Fort. The modern city as we know it today developed only after 1911 when Delhi became the capital of British India.

## Planning a new capital:

1911, when King George V was crowned in England, a Durbar was held in Delhi to celebrate the occasion. The decision to shift the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi was announced at this Durbar. New Delhi was constructed as a 10-square-mile city on Raisina Hill, south of the existing city. Two architects, Edward Lutyens and Herbert Baker, were called on to design New Delhi and its buildings. The government complex in New Delhi consisted of a two-mile avenue, Kingsway (now Rajpath), that led to the Viceroy's Palace (now Rashtrapati Bhavan), with the Secretariat buildings on either side of the avenue. If we summarize the Mughal architecture style, we find that Mughal Architecture emerged as a form of Indo-Islamic architecture during the rule of the Mughal Empire. Mughal architecture is characterized by large bulbous onion domes, the use of white marble and red sandstone, delicate ornamentation work, and large buildings surrounded by gardens on all four sides. The use of red sandstone and marble characterized the architecture of the Delhi Sultanate. Red sandstone was used for the construction of walls, domes, and minarets. Marble was used for intricate carvings and calligraphy. The Sultans of Delhi introduced a new type of architecture. The monuments they built had arches, domes, and minarets as the main features. The Mughal architecture was an amalgamation of Persian, Turkic, Timurid Iranian, Central Asian, and Indian Hindu styles of architecture. They introduced a new style of architecture known as 'Indo-Islamic.' Arches, domes, and minarets form the main features of this style. The Delhi Sultanate was mainly Islamic, while the Mughal Empire was characterized by religious tolerance. During the British colonial period, European styles, including Neoclassical, Gothic Revival, and Baroque, became prevalent across India. The architectural style was set apart by open verandas, tall, narrow windows, ornate colonnades, chajjas, cornice jaalis, and simple, attractive facades with proportionately balanced details. Sir Edwin Lutyens, in full Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens (born March 29, 1869, London, England—died January 1, 1944, London), was an English architect noted for his versatility and range of invention along traditional lines. He is known especially for his planning of New Delhi and his design of the Viceroy's House there. New Delhi was constructed as a 10-square-mile city on Raisina Hill, south of the existing city.

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