

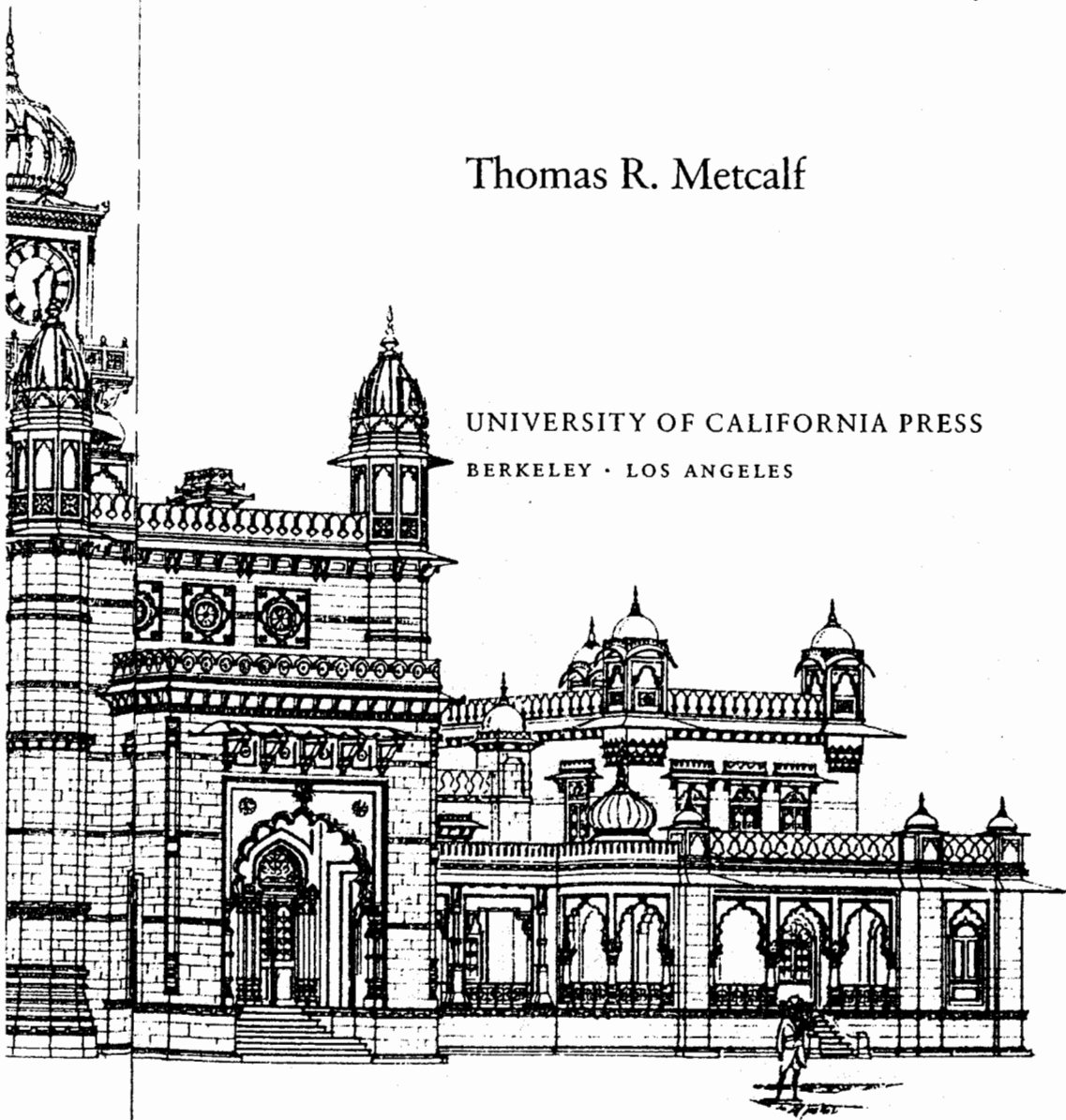
An Imperial Vision

Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj

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New Delhi:

The Beginning of the End

On 12 December 1911, at a durbar in Delhi to celebrate his recent coronation as king-emperor, George V announced the transfer of the Indian capital from Calcutta to Delhi. A move undertaken in large part to enable the government to escape the uncomfortable political atmosphere of Calcutta, marked by continued and often violent demonstrations of nationalist sentiment since Lord Curzon's 1905 partition of Bengal, the transfer foreshadowed a renewed alliance of the Raj with the princes and with the Muslims of northern India, for whom Delhi had "historic associations." The change involved as well an effort, anticipated by the earlier Delhi durbars, to lay claim to India's past. As the viceroy, Lord Hardinge, wrote in support of the decision, "Delhi is still a name to conjure with. It is intimately associated in the minds of the Hindus with sacred legends which go back even beyond the dawn of history. . . . To the Mohammedans it would be a source of unbounded gratification to see the ancient capital of the Moguls restored to its proud position as the seat of the Empire." The secretary of state, Lord Crewe, declared that the creation of a new capital would be taken as "an unfaltering determination to maintain British rule in India."¹ The transfer nevertheless went hand in hand with Britain's first defeat in its dealings with India's nationalists; for the king-emperor, from the same platform, announced the revocation of the partition of Bengal and the creation in its place of a united province dominated by the English-educated *bhadralok* elite. The new capital, for all the grandeur of its conception, was to mark the beginning of the end.

The shift of the capital raised in urgent fashion the question of how the Empire ought most appropriately to be represented in stone. Despite

its illustrious past, the Delhi of 1911, a mere district headquarters, was in no way fit to house the imperial government. Indeed, one of the attractions of the transfer was the opportunity it provided for the elaboration of an imperial architecture. As the king himself said at the durbar, "It is my desire that the planning and designing of the public buildings to be erected will be considered with the greatest deliberation and care, so that the new creation may be in every way worthy of this ancient and beautiful city."² But there was no consensus as to what style of architecture would bring about this objective. Hence different interests and different conceptions of architecture struggled to shape the design of the new imperial capital. On one side were the partisans of Indo-Saracenic design, who saw in the relocation of the capital in the Mughal heartland an opportunity for Britain to emulate her great imperial predecessors, above all Akbar, the builder of Fatehpur Sikri, and Shah Jahan, whose Shahjahanabad, the seat of the later Mughal emperors, was the heart of the Delhi of the nineteenth century. An Indic-styled Delhi attracted the crafts enthusiasts too, as they saw in it an opportunity for the country's artisans to participate at last in the construction of major public buildings. Yet at the same time the assertive imperialism of the Edwardian era, as we have seen, insisted that the forms of European classicism alone could adequately represent empire in stone. As the king was speaking at the Coronation durbar, Baker's classically styled Union Buildings and Curzon's Victoria Memorial were both in the process of construction.

In the end, Indo-Saracenic design was decisively repudiated. Yet classicism, as the viceroy, Lord Hardinge, and with him Herbert Baker, sought to "orientalise" its forms, secured but an uncertain victory. The chief designer of the new capital, Edwin Lutyens, committed to the aesthetic purity of beaux-arts design, on his part contemptuously rejected Indic forms and at the same time assimilated them into an architecture stamped with an extraordinary personal genius. But Lutyens's work set no lasting tradition. In architecture as in politics, the building of New Delhi was to mark out the beginning of the end of Britain's mastery over India.

The Struggle for an Indic-Styled Capital

Within ten days of the Coronation durbar, on 22 December 1911, E. B. Havell, now retired from his post as principal of the Calcutta School of

Art, launched the first salvo in the campaign for an "Indic" Delhi. In a letter to the *Times* he pointed out that, with the move to Delhi, the capital "will leave the commercial atmosphere of Calcutta, with its shoddy imitations of European architecture—its bastard Gothic and emasculated Italian Renaissance—and find itself in the heart of Hindustan, where the artistic traditions of Indian building are still, for all practical architectural purposes, as much alive as they were when Akbar, by calling into the service of the State the skill of Hindu temple builders, gave Saracenic architecture in India a wonderful new impulse." He urged the Indian government, with the "finest models of Mogul design" so near at hand, to take advantage at last of India's traditions of construction and design.³

Havell continued throughout the subsequent year to press for the adoption in Delhi of an Indic-styled architecture. Challenged by Curzon and Baker, he insisted that it was no more difficult to adapt Mughal palaces to modern requirements than it had been in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for the architects of that day to adapt Greek and Roman temples to their secular requirements. No doubt, he said, Shah Jahan's buildings were too extravagant. But none of Akbar's palaces at Fatehpur Sikri or in the Agra Fort was "unreasonably costly." These buildings were, indeed, "of a serious and dignified style which any competent European architect in sympathy with Indian craftsmen could adapt to modern purposes." The case for Indic architecture, however, for Havell went beyond mere considerations of cost. At issue was Britain's mission in India. "We are trustees for India's intellectual and material possessions," he told the East India Association in an impassioned plea; "we have Imperial pledges to fulfill. India, the real India, needs a Renaissance of her own art. . . . Whatever the Renaissance may mean to us, it means only one thing in India—the ruin of Indian craftsmanship, the intellectual impoverishment of the educated classes, and the strangling of Indian art."⁴

Havell's call for an Indic architecture at Delhi did not, then, stand by itself. With it was incorporated a larger project of reviving, or sustaining, the whole of India's traditional culture and means of livelihood. Havell admitted that India's art had "lost vitality" and needed "the judicious artistic application of Western science and mechanical invention." Nevertheless, he insisted, the British Empire must not be "a battering ram for pulverising the effete social and industrial organisation of Hinduism." Britain's message to India must not be that she must "entirely forsake her own learning, her craft, her art, and her science, and humbly sit at the

feet of Europe to learn civilization." Above all else, in Havell's view, the government had a duty to preserve India's village-based economy. In words that at once harked back to Ruskin and anticipated Mahatma Gandhi, he argued that the government must come forward as "the active and sympathetic defender of the village weaver, both the artisan and the artist, against the assaults of Western capitalism; instead of being regarded as the strongest ally of the capitalist in extending the worse than savagery of European industrial slums to India."⁵

Yet Havell was no Gandhi, for he accepted the concept of a "traditional" India, in need of British guidance, that underlay the late-Victorian view of empire. The "heart of India," as he saw it, was represented not by "the India of the Indian leaders," who had been "progressively captured by European Rationalism," but by "the Indian people abiding by the Indian traditions." Britain's task was to secure "the goodwill of this India." A Delhi built by Indian craftsmen working under British supervision "would prove that Indian and British Imperial interests were not antagonistic, but really and truly identical." In this way Britain would "give India of her best" and at the same time "use both for her own and India's advancement, all the resources of Indian culture and practical experience." From such a "reconciliation between Eastern and Western ideals" could spring, indeed, not only a revitalized Raj but "a greater Renaissance than the world has ever known." A "message of hope for India," New Delhi would stand as a lasting challenge at once to the "Europeanized" nationalism of India's elites and the "degradation" of modern capitalism.⁶

As the debate over Delhi intensified, others rallied to Havell's standard. Already in 1910, before the transfer of the capital, the India Society, organized to study Indian culture "in all its aesthetic aspects," had pressed the India Office to undertake a study of the "living traditions" of Indian art and architecture. In response the government had sent Gordon Sanderson of the Archeological Survey on a photographic tour of northern India and then in 1912, following the durbar, hurried his report, accompanied by ninety-three illustrations of Indian buildings, into print. Architecture, Sanderson concluded, despite a decline in British India, was still, especially in the princely states of Rajputana, a "living art," with "excellent master craftsmen" to be found "in plenty." In an introduction to the report, John Begg, consulting architect to the Government of India, added his authority to its plea for the revitalization of India's building crafts. Oriental architecture, he said, though now decadent, was still a

“living tradition” that could be “modernized” to “supply all the complex needs of modern India.”⁷

Meanwhile, on 6 February 1913, as Sanderson’s report was being printed, a group of prominent artists, scholars, and members of both Houses of Parliament presented to the India Office a petition urging the employment of Indian craftsmen in the construction of New Delhi. Among the 175 signatories were Thomas Hardy, George Bernard Shaw, poet laureate Alfred Austin, art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy, the duke of Newcastle, and Lord Napier of Magdala. Nowadays, they argued, although in England no “traditional” craftsmen survived, but only “mechanics dully earning a living,” in India the force of “genuine craftsmanship” remained “vital and tremendous.” The government ought therefore to take advantage of this “unbroken building tradition of more than 2,000 years” and build the new capital, as “all the great buildings of the world” have been erected, by using “the master-builder with his craftsmen, working in accustomed materials upon the site from simple instructions as to accommodation and arrangement such as would have been given to a master-mason or a master-carpenter by a medieval king or bishop.” In so doing the British government would at once save from “extinction” this “living craftsmanship” and “tie the natives of India more closely” to the “Mother Country.”⁸

Havell, with those like-minded enthusiasts who organized the 1913 petition, was concerned almost wholly with the opportunity Delhi afforded for the revival of Indian crafts production. For others, especially those who had themselves worked as builders in India, what mattered most was the architectural style chosen for the new city. Apprehensive over the challenge posed by the classical revival, they took care to point out what they saw as the inappropriate political implications of the selection of such a style. Begg, for example, in concluding his introduction to Sanderson’s report, argued that “a Western manner” in Delhi would only announce a period that is past—that of the “mere Western occupation of the country.” Why, he asked, “should the style of our Capital be such as to express most strongly those alien characteristics in the administration which every year tend more and more to disappear?” The “architectural note we sound in the new capital” should suggest instead “the reawakened India of the present and future.”⁹

F. O. Oertel, superintending engineer of Allahabad, home on leave at the end of a long career in India with the Public Works Department, argued even more forcefully on behalf of the incorporation of Indian archi-

tectural styles in the new capital. With Begg he insisted that "those who advocate a Colonial Renaissance style . . . forget the true significance of the move to Delhi and of our position in the country." We are not, he reminded the East India Association, "in India as colonists intent on making a home there as nearly like the one we have left behind," but rather to "exercise Imperial sway . . . with the consent of the people and for their benefit." The transfer of the capital signified afresh that India was to be ruled "for India's benefit alone and according to Indian sentiment, thereby consolidating the union between India and England for their mutual advantage." As the British Indian educational system, blighted by the "anglicism" of Macaulay's Minute, had been a "failure," so too in architecture would the use of styles foreign to the "understanding" of the Indian peasant inevitably mean that the British Raj itself "will remain foreign to him, however just, equitable, and beneficial it may be."¹⁰

To find a "really national Indian style," Oertel continued, the designers of the new Delhi had only to look at the buildings of the "great Emperor Akbar." At his hilltop capital of Fatehpur Sikri, employing mostly Hindu craftsmen, Akbar had created, Oertel said, expressing the long-standing British view of that emperor's building, a "truly Indian style, bringing into happy union both Hindu and Muhammadan forms." Now that we "are establishing our capital at the seat of the old Moghal Empire," urged Oertel, "let us endeavour to follow in the footsteps of Akbar." Nor would this be difficult. Such designers as Swinton Jacob had already erected many "successful" buildings inspired by the style of Fatehpur Sikri, and there existed besides "quite a number of clever Indian draftsmen, trained in Jaipur, who have attained sufficient skill in the style to enable them to successfully compete whenever designs for public buildings are called for in India."¹¹

Oertel insisted, as he wrote privately to Lord Curzon, that he did not hold "the extreme views" of Havell, and that he had no objection to such buildings as the Viceroy's House and the Council Chamber being designed in the Italian Renaissance or other Western style. In the controversy over Delhi, however, the crafts enthusiasts and the Indo-Saracenic architects found themselves for the most part in agreement. To be sure, Havell remained adamantly opposed to the use of any Western style, and he still disdained the "archeological pedantry" of the Indo-Saracenic builder. He nevertheless acknowledged that at Delhi the craftsmen would have to be "directed" by Europeans, and that it might well be necessary

to employ the "Orientalized" designs of a British architect. The program suggested in the 1913 petition was, he later admitted, "a counsel of artistic perfection." What mattered was that the official architects associate themselves, as "fellow artists and craftsmen," with those, "descendents of the very men who built Fatehpur-Sikri, Delhi, and Agra," who still kept alive India's ancient building traditions. Although Oertel, on his side, remained skeptical of the widespread existence of untutored "indigenous talent," with such men as T. H. Hendley, R. F. Chisholm, and Swinton Jacob, he agreed that the best arrangement for the building of New Delhi would be "a combination of the European architect with the Indian craftsman."¹²

For the exponents of an "Indic"-styled Delhi, then, the new capital was meant to signify the ending of an empire based on conquest, and its replacement by one derived from "the consent and support of the people." The selection of a style for Delhi, as Oertel pointed out, was "a question, not of what is most to *our* taste and liking, but of what suits India best and is most in harmony with the feelings of the Indians, especially since the mass of the people using the new public buildings will be Indian and not European." The reliance on Indian craftsmen, and an Indic-styled architecture, would visibly proclaim the coming into being of this new, more sympathetic Raj. Following in the footsteps of the ruler they saw as the "wise" Akbar, the British could at once reconstruct the bridge of understanding between communities which his "intolerant" successor, Aurangzeb, had "deliberately" broken down, and "guide" India's progress, "not by forcing Western forms upon it, but by aiding its natural development."¹³

This determination to reconcile "East" and "West" under the "fostering care" of the Raj flowed in part from the growing interest in, and more favorable appreciation of, India's artistic heritage. Unlike those who had gone before in the crafts movement, Havell, even as principal of the Calcutta School of Art, was drawn to the study of India's fine arts as well as its crafts, and in his historical writing he consistently challenged the notion that everything of value in India's art was derived from foreign sources. Nor did Havell stand alone. In 1911 Vincent Smith, announcing that a "change of opinion was in progress," published the first comprehensive *History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*. The next year Ananda Coomaraswamy made known, for the first time, the existence of Rajput miniature painting; his comprehensive account, published in 1916, so

Pramod Chandra has written, "changed entirely the understanding of Indian painting." As the West's own self-confidence waned—its "self-complacency and conceit" now widely under attack—even India's religions, with the artistic forms that represented them, ceased to be so repellent and so threatening. "We recognize in the Buddha type of sacred figure," wrote thirteen artists and critics in a letter to the *Times* in 1910, "one of the great artistic inspirations of the world." In opposition to the disparaging views of such men as the aging George Birdwood, they went on to express the hope that India's art would continue to preserve "those ancient and profound religious conceptions which are the glory of India and of all the Eastern world."¹⁴

Enthusiasm for an "Indic" Delhi, and a more sympathetic Raj, embodied as well a fear of what the future might hold for British rule in India. The political climate too, as well as the cultural, was changing. Many elements of course, in the views of men like Havell, continued from the past. The notion, above all, of a "traditional" India, which "still clings proudly to her own spiritual and intellectual heritage," was hardly new. But it was now essential, as never before, to win the support of this India—an India of princes and peasants and artisans. A tone of urgency marked Havell's pleas that they be incorporated into the Raj by a capital city that spoke to them in familiar architectural language and provided employment for their traditional crafts. An India so conceived inevitably excluded the English-educated. But this was no cause for regret. Indeed, Havell insisted, before the British could succeed in the task of reconciling "Eastern and Western ideals," they had first to overcome the legacy of "Macaulayism," which for eighty years had fueled a "philistine war of extermination against Hinduism." Such animosity toward the educated, who had repudiated their own heritage, was by no means new. But the Westernized elite, caught up in "sedition," now posed a threat to the Raj. Havell urged the opening up of increased employment in such fields as architecture as a way to end the politically dangerous concentration of educated Indians in law and politics. But "in the hour of England's peril," he concluded, this class would "not help us much."¹⁵ Fearful and anxious, the supporters of an "Indic" Delhi sought, by grounding the Raj securely in India's past, to ensure for it a place in India's future.

In such an endeavor there was no hope of success. By 1912 the "Indo-Saracenic" enterprise had exhausted its purpose. As Britain's power over India waned, so too did the self-confident sense of "knowing" a fixed In-

dia that had sustained the work of the Indo-Saracenic builders. In the new nationalist India the old symbols that had defined the legitimacy of the Raj no longer commanded respect as they had in the past. Hence it was hardly surprising that the proponents of a "Saracenic" architecture, so out of touch with the reality of twentieth-century India, were denied the commission for the new capital city.

The Search for an "Oriental" Classicism

If Indo-Saracenic was regarded as inappropriate for the new city, so too, for most critics, was a wholly Western and classical form. Some influential voices, as we shall see later, among them Lord Curzon and Edwin Lutyens, spoke up, at least initially, for the use of an avowedly European architecture. As Lutyens wrote in May 1912, during his first trip to India, "I do want old England to stand up and plant her great traditions and good taste where she goes and not pander to sentiment and all this silly Moghul-Hindu stuff." Curzon too argued that a "non-Indian, a foreign, and a Western system" of government could not be "satisfied by Indian or Asiatic architectural forms." The viceroy, Lord Hardinge, however, was determined to avoid "building in the plains of Delhi a purely Western town." The architecture of the new capital, he insisted, "must be imbued with the spirit of the East such as will appeal to Orientals as well as to Europeans." The question was, he wrote Curzon, one not only of practical but of "political importance," for the Indians must not be made to feel that they were to have no say in the design of their new capital, but only to be asked to pay for it.¹⁶

Yet Hardinge had no clear idea as to how a European architecture should be "orientalised," or what this might mean for the various buildings to be put up in the new city. In February 1912 he described his preferred style as "Plain Classic" with a "touch of Orientalism." In August he spoke of "buildings of a bold and plain character with an Oriental adaptation," and in October of a "good broad classic style with an Indian motif."¹⁷ From the outset Hardinge was prepared to draw a distinction between the Government House, which as the residence of the viceroy he conceded could be constructed in "some form of Renaissance slightly orientalised as in Spain," while the secretariats, open to the coming and going of Indians, had to adopt a more "Indic" style. For this rea-

son he was willing, before Lutyens had completed his first tour in 1912, to award him the commission for Government House, while insisting at the same time upon a competition, open to Indian architects, for the secretariats. Even so, he urged Lutyens to incorporate into the design for Government House "a flat golden dome," which, he insisted, would go "admirably" with a Renaissance style. A year later, after a visit to Bikaner, Hardinge further suggested that, in designing the Durbar Hall of Government House, Lutyens follow "the general lines" of Bikaner's new "very large and really beautiful" Durbar Hall.¹⁸

As he cast about for suitable "Oriental" models, Hardinge inevitably turned first to the Indo-Saracenic designs of Swinton Jacob. The "Oriental architecture" of his buildings, he reported after visiting the new Canning College and Medical College at Lucknow, was "extraordinarily good"; and he found Jacob's work in Rajputana, especially that in Bikaner, equally attractive. Indian opinion too he found "extremely pleased" with Jacob's architecture.¹⁹ Yet it was hardly possible to combine these designs with any "plain" classic style. Nor were the buildings of Agra and Fatehpur Sikri, from which the British Indo-Saracenic builders had drawn inspiration and on which they wished to model the new capital, any better suited to the requirements of an "orientalised" classicism. Mughal building, in Hardinge's view, had "suffered from the admixture of the Hindu style, which is far too ornate." Instead, he looked further back in time—to the pre-Mughal dynasties of the Delhi sultanate and its successor states. This style, the so-called Pathan, "far purer" than the Mughal, he said, "with its rectangular or hexagonal columns, its breadth of treatment with big walls, buttresses, flat domes and few windows would lend itself to a composition with Italian architecture that would inspire beauty, solidity, and originality."²⁰

This preference for the "broad and simple" Pathan style involved more than aesthetic considerations. To abandon Fatehpur Sikri as an imperial model in favor of fifteenth-century Mandu, where Hardinge located the "best style of Indian building," carried with it political implications as well. Hardinge was by no means alone in disparaging the "ornate" character of "Hindu" architecture. But to seek to avoid its "taint" in New Delhi would undercut the conception, which the "mixed" Indo-Saracenic style had expressed, of the British presiding over and bringing together India's two communities, as they conceived that Akbar

had done. The "stern simplicity" of Mandu, with such comparable sites as Tughlaqabad, by contrast announced only Britain's mastery over the subcontinent.

Hardinge was determined, nevertheless, to make clear through the architecture of Delhi that Britain's Raj must now be conceived of as a joint Indian and British enterprise. "It must be remembered," he told Lutyens, "that it is not a British administration that is building the new city, as was the case when Calcutta was built, but a British Indian administration that is charged with the task." Hence the classical forms that clothed the old capital would be inappropriate in the new. Furthermore, every year "the Indian element in the administration" was growing in "influence and learning." Only a mixture of East and West—of Pathan and Palladian—could be "symbolical of the India of the twentieth century."²¹

Such sentiments brought Hardinge close to Herbert Baker, whose Pretoria Union Buildings reflected a similar conception of the role of architecture in empire. Baker, at work in South Africa, came to the attention of the Indian authorities only in October 1912, after Lutyens had already assumed a central role in the planning of the new capital. The occasion was a letter to the *Times*. In June, sensing that Lutyens's views on the appropriate architectural style for New Delhi did not coincide with those of the viceroy, the editor of the *Times*, Geoffrey Robinson, suggested to Baker that he "write something for us of a general character on the principles of architecture which should be applied to the building of the new Delhi."²² The letter, published on 3 October, precipitated a chorus of enthusiastic recommendations that Baker himself be given a part in the building of the capital. Captain George Swinton, head of the Delhi Town Planning Committee, told Hardinge that, although Baker was "not much more than a name to me until he wrote that letter to the *Times*," within a week, after examining a series of photographs of Baker's South African buildings, he had come to the conclusion that here was a man who "is a successful architect and speaks not only like a poet, but like a statesman." The governor-general of South Africa, Viscount Gladstone, at the same time wrote Crewe at the India Office urging Baker's appointment, with Lutyens, to the Delhi position. Baker's "genius," he said, "lies in adapting his buildings to the scenery," and, as the country round Delhi was similar to that in South Africa, Baker "would be in his element."²³ Within a month the India Office had come round to the idea

of a collaborative project. By January Baker was on his way to India to join Lutyens. According to the terms of their agreement Lutyens took responsibility for the overall layout of the city and the design of its centerpiece, the Viceroy's House, while Baker had charge of designing the two secretariat blocks which flanked the approach to the viceroy's residence.²⁴

Until his appointment to Delhi, Baker, who had never been to India, knew of Indo-Saracenic design only from his reading of Fergusson and other architectural historians. He nevertheless insisted, as he wrote in the letter to the *Times*, that, while this style may "express the charm and fascination of India," still "it has not the constructive and geometrical qualities necessary to embody the idea of law and order which has been produced out of chaos by the British Administration." No doubt, he admitted, a "beautiful" city would be created by tracing Mughal architecture back to its "origin" in the "purer forms of the Saracenic of Cairo and Damascus," but such a city would be no more Indian than British. We should instead, he argued, "fearlessly put the stamp of British sovereignty" on the "great work of which the Empire should be so proud." That meant inevitably the employment of "the eternal principles of ordered beauty" found in European classical architecture.²⁵

Like the viceroy, Baker was concerned above all with the political implications of the new capital's architecture. As he wrote Lutyens, Delhi "must not be Indian, nor English, nor Roman, but it must be Imperial." Hence it would be inappropriate simply to adopt unaltered an English classical, or any other, style. An imperial architecture, as he had learned in South Africa, could accomplish its objectives only by adapting its "elemental and universal forms" to the climate and cultural traditions of the colonial territory. At its heart lay adaptation to the "needs of a more southern climate." Here classical architecture had, in Baker's view, the great advantage that, as it had been developed in the warm and sunny Mediterranean, it was already well suited to tropical building. The classical colonnade, for instance, "if rarely needed in England," where it was found only as a "meaningless survival" in pilasters, was "always desirable in Southern Europe and our Southern Dominions, and is absolutely essential for protection from tropical sun and rain in the plains of India." Similarly, he continued, "every feature of classic architecture which has proved a stumbling block to the northern architect becomes a rational necessity when he works in brighter and hotter climates."²⁶

In South Africa, as we have seen, Baker sought to take into account the country's cultural heritage by incorporating elements of Cape Dutch

design into his work, and at the same time he consistently adopted features, such as overhanging eaves, that moderated the country's intense sunlight. For the most part, however, he found little need, in designing such structures as the Union Buildings, to alter the enduring classical forms. The symbolism of this architectural style, he realized, could appeal directly to its intended audience, for the South African Boer, despite the bitter hostilities of the war, shared with Baker and the English a European heritage. In India, as Baker perceived at the outset, the situation was altogether different and presented "much greater difficulties." The "wide divergence of race and climate which separate East and West in the British Empire," together with the powerful hold of "sentiment and tradition" over the Indian people, could well, he wrote in his letter to the *Times*, make "fusion" seem "as impossible in architecture as in race and national character." Nevertheless, he insisted, British rule in India was no "mere veneer of government and culture," but a "new civilization in growth, a blend of the best elements of East and West." The imperial architecture of Delhi, to be successful, had to express in stone the "same spirit" that animated those "who are building up the fabric of modern India."²⁷

Hence, upon his arrival Baker set out energetically "to learn all that I could of India." With Lord Hardinge's encouragement, often accompanied by Lutyens, he visited most of the ancient cities of northern and central India from Lahore south to Ahmedabad and east to Bodhgaya. He also read "books of Indian art." None of this study much altered Baker's view of the country's architectural heritage. Havell's *History*, for instance, with its praise of the "genius" of the Hindu, and its endeavor to show the Indian, and Hindu, character of even Mughal buildings, Baker regarded as marred by "special pleading, prejudice and ignorance of the basic truths of architecture." He preferred instead the work of Vincent Smith, which, though innovative in recognizing the existence of Indian fine art, continued the Victorian tradition of attributing all the "nobler features" of India's architecture to Western sources. In his letter to the *Times* Baker had insisted that the high domed portal arch, so prominent in Mughal architecture, had its "prototype" in the Roman baths, while the "pride of Indian architecture," the dome, could be "traced through Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire" and had, in any case, "its highest manifestation in St. Paul's." He later speculated that even the pierced-stone *jaali* screen might have been derived from the chancel screens and pierced masonry windows of Rome.²⁸ Such views of course at

once reflected a pride in the achievements of the West and helped to justify the use in his designs for Delhi of these architectural forms.

At the conclusion of his first Indian tour Baker summed up for Hardinge his view of how to create "a style which would be distinctly Indian." First, he said, we should build upon "the accumulated knowledge and experience of the Great Masters of the [European classical] past," which would "express the experience of the British administration." The "next essential" was the adaptation of the design to climate and local materials; these "in themselves force us to a large degree to the Southern and Indian." Then, finally, "we must try to graft on, to our organism thus adapted to the material conditions of India, all that we can accept of what is best in Indian sentiment and achievement in art, and which does not conflict with our ideals." In practice this meant following India's builders "in the greatness of their methods rather than in the superficialities and prettinesses of their style." The "picturesque confusion" of "balconies, oriels, turrets and domelets," which, he said, provided most of the "charm" of the structures illustrated in Havell's book, would be "very much out of place in a practical Secretariat building, nor in Government House would they be considered as attributes of awe and majesty." The "lessons" India's architecture taught were to be found, not in the "shape" of the arches and vaults, but in their "thickness," together with such other structural features as the mass of the walls and domes, the depth of open halls, and the raised platforms on which buildings stood.²⁹

Apart from the recessed Mughal portal entryway, three "characteristically Indian" features appealed to Baker as "appropriate" for incorporation in the buildings of the new imperial capital. These were the *chajja*, or wide-projecting cornice; the *jaali*, or pierced-stone lattice screen; and the *chattri*, or free-standing canopied turret. The compelling attraction of both *chajja* and *jaali* was, however, for Baker, not so much their Indian form as their suitability for use in the Indian climate. The projecting cornice, which, as he later wrote, both he and Lutyens made a distinctive feature of "all our Delhi buildings," served not only to "protect the walls and windows from the high sun, but also from any but driving rain, and thus allow the open window." Similarly, the intricately carved *jaali* screen had the advantage of admitting the air but not the light of the high sun. The *chattri* alone he adopted for wholly aesthetic reasons: that of breaking the long, horizontal skylines of the flat-roofed secretariats.³⁰

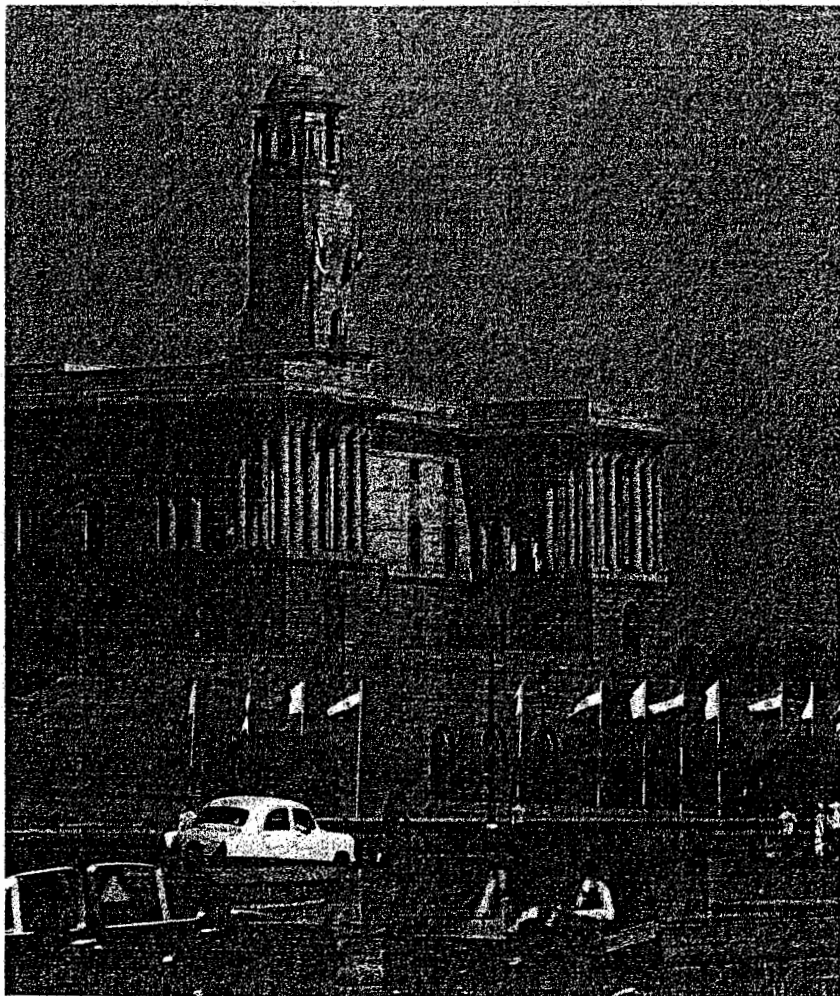
Hardinge remained unconvinced that a city designed along such lines would be, as Baker argued, "distinctly Indian." Indeed, Baker's admis-

sion that "we have already accepted the column and lintel; and this in itself must carry us away from the more definite Indian styles" only reinforced his doubts. To make certain, therefore, that the new city had a visibly "Indic" appearance, Hardinge insisted upon the "association" of Swinton Jacob with the Lutyens-Baker team appointed in January 1913. Jacob's role, he said, was to be that of architectural adviser to ensure that there "should be no doubt as to the introduction of Indian tradition in the new buildings."³¹ At the same time Hardinge himself pressed Baker and Lutyens to adopt, along with the *chattri*, *jaali*, and *chajja*, the four-centered pointed Mughal arch. For him the use of the pointed arch, more than any other architectural device, would testify to the "Oriental" character of the new city. "In the East," he wrote Lutyens, "the pointed arch is a symbol, and has a meaning which all Indians understand, while a round arch means nothing at all." To be sure, he acknowledged, the round arch, which Lutyens and Baker both favored, found a prominent place in the government buildings in Pretoria, where it was "not at all out of place." But, he insisted, "Pretoria is not Delhi." To "fight against tradition and the symbolism of centuries" would lead only to failure, whereas "to adopt them and blend them with English (not Italian) traditions means success." "In your London surroundings," he challenged Lutyens, "you cannot feel the whisperings of the East, but I have lived fifteen years in the East, and I know and feel the language of Eastern buildings."³²

Lutyens retorted that there "can be nothing un-Indian in so simple a form as the round arch," while Baker on his side insisted, as he wrote later, that use of the Mughal arch would produce "ugly shapes and misfits" incompatible with the simplicities of classical design that underlay the whole scheme. Confronted by this adamant opposition, Hardinge in the end let the two architects have their way. Reflecting on the controversy, he told Constance Villiers-Stuart in May 1914 that "in dealing with English architects, there is much prejudice in style to overcome. I have had my way in some things but not in all. But then I am not an Architect."³³

Despite their differences, Baker and Hardinge alike conceived of architecture in explicitly political terms, and both saw in the "blended" style of an "orientalised" classicism a foreshadowing of the "happy marriage" between the ideals of East and West that they expected to mark out the British Indian Empire in the twentieth century. Unlike the Indo-Saracenic designers, who sought to cope with the upheavals of the new century by tying the Raj ever more tightly to a "traditional" India, Har-

dinge and Baker disparaged the effort to define Britain's Raj solely in Indian terms. The new city, as Baker so memorably put it, had to "embody the idea of law and order which has been produced out of chaos by the British Administration." Some of the most prominent classical features in Baker's secretariat design, above all the columned porticoes opening



48. Secretariat, New Delhi. North Block from the Great Place below. Note the

similarity of the columned porticoes to those in Pretoria. Photograph by author.

from the top ministerial offices far above the plain, were meant, like their counterparts in Pretoria, to reinforce this sense of empire (fig. 48); for from these porches ministers could look out "over the far ruinous sites of the historic cities of the Hindu and Mahomedan dynasties to the new Capital beneath them" that united "for the first time through the centuries all races and religions of India."³⁴ Yet Baker, like Hardinge, realized that mere assertion was not sufficient to accommodate a political order in which Indians increasingly shared power with their British rulers. At the same time, however, for both men, their conception of "India" remained shaped by the Orientalist constructions of the nineteenth century. Like the Indo-Saracenic builders, they believed that Indians, as "Orientals," were fundamentally different from Europeans, and that in consequence there existed a "language of Eastern building" which it was possible to "know and feel." But neither Baker nor Hardinge was willing—or able—to speak through that constructed "language."

As a result, uncertain how best to proceed, they sought refuge in the notion of an architecture that "grafted" some of the "simpler" elements of "Eastern" design, drawn from such early sites as Mandu, onto a Western form. In so doing they conceived that they were returning to a "purer" Saracenic style. No doubt too, such a style could more easily be combined with Western classical forms. But at the same time it announced a retreat from the self-confidence of the Indo-Saracenic builders. Where Swinton Jacob had confidently asserted his mastery of India's architectural traditions, Baker sought no more than a "graft" of that which could be readily comprehended and would help moderate India's fierce climate. Indeed, the notion of "grafting" itself betrayed the superficial nature of Baker's commitment to Indic forms. In 1926 he described the principle that had shaped his designs as being "to weave into the fabric of the more elemental and universal forms of architecture the thread of such Indian traditional shapes and features as may be compatible with the nature and use of the buildings."³⁵ Yet in practice neither the design nor Baker's conception of it involved much "weaving." Instead, the elements that made up the design were separately identified as "Indian" and as classical or "elemental" and then set side by side. Nor was this simply a matter of Baker's inexpertise in design. To the contrary, each set of elements, to accomplish its political objectives, had to be clearly visible as such: the columns, porticoes, and domes of the secretariats to announce Britain's sovereignty; the *chattris*, *jaalis*, and *chajjas* to proclaim that the Raj was now Indian as well as British. (See plate 17.)

Yet an “orientalised” classicism evaded as many problems as it solved. Above all, no more than Havell did Baker and Hardinge confront the question of incorporating the English-educated Indian into their representational system. Too astute to grasp at a waning “traditional” India, they were still too caught up in the assumptions of the past to seek for a way to achieve what Baker had so successfully accomplished in South Africa as he brought Smuts and Botha to share his vision of the Union Buildings. If the Indo-Saracenic plan for New Delhi sought a world that was past, Baker’s embodied an idealized vision of empire hardly less out of touch with twentieth-century India.

Lutyens, Saracenic Design and the Viceroy’s Palace

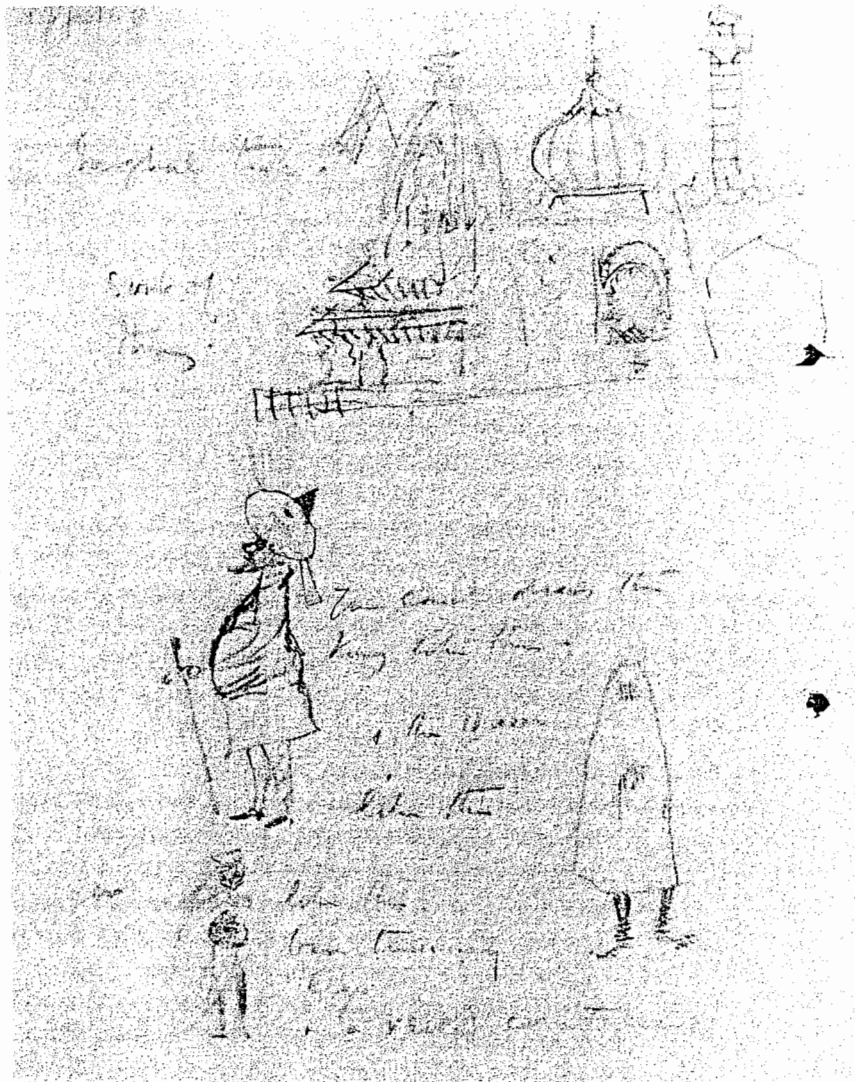
From his arrival on the subcontinent in March 1912 as a member of the Delhi Town Planning Commission, Edwin Lutyens wasted no time in appreciation of India’s historic architecture. Personally, he wrote to his wife, with an arrogant gesture of disdain, “I do not believe there is *any* real Indian architecture or any great tradition. There are just spurts by various mushroom dynasties with as much intellect as there is in any other *art nouveau*.” All Indian buildings, even the Taj Mahal, though sometimes picturesque and decorative, were pervaded by a “childish ignorance” of the basic principles of architecture. In a letter to Baker, still in South Africa, he described, facetiously, how one would erect buildings in the two chief Indian styles. If a “Hindu” structure were required, he wrote, “set square stones and build childwise, but, before you erect, carve every stone differently and independently, with lace patterns and terrifying shape. On top, over trabeated pendentives, set—an onion.” If the choice were “Moghul,” he continued, build “a vasty mass of rough concrete, elephant-wise, on a very simple rectangular-cum-octagon plan, dome in anyhow, cutting off square. Overlay with a veneer of stone patterns, like laying a vertical tile floor, and get Italians to help you. . . . Then on top of the mass put three turnips in concrete and overlay with stone or marble as before. Be very careful not to bond anything in, and don’t care a damn if it does all come to pieces.”³⁶

At Hardinge’s request, on his second Indian tour in December 1912, Lutyens visited the viceroy’s favorite “Saracenic” city, the remote Mandu. Though he found Mandu “set in wonderful scenery and on a wonderful

site," architecturally it had no more to recommend it than any other Indian design. "Behind it all," he wrote, "the building is childish, and of that quality of art so dear to the literary mind—work done in a hurry by old war-worn conquerors, ruthless and squalid, with no real nicety as the great Westerners felt it." As a whole the structures possessed "a wonderful made picturesqueness" but no "intellect," and the plans were "quite impracticable, except as entertainment rooms for those who wear no clothes, want no furniture, and have no real reason for building except pomp and ceremony, as in, for instance, giant stairways leading to balconies where one man can squat and another precariously stand to wave a flag-fan of peacock plumes."³⁷

Lutyens's appraisal of British Indo-Saracenic was no more favorable. He disparaged the "towers and domes" of Madras as the Raj's own "particular form of vulgarity"; Swinton Jacob, though "personally a dear old gentleman," in his view, had "no architectural ability at all." Jacob's buildings, Lutyens told Baker, not altogether inaccurately, are "all made up of tit bits culled from various buildings of various dates put together with no sense of relation or of scale." The "shoddy" Albert Hall at Jaipur, where he stopped on his very first visit to "pay his respects" to Jacob, was, like such other structures as the "very elaborate and cheap" Daly College, Indore, "absolutely in want of all that Haldane has described as clear thinking."³⁸ In the end, when Hardinge insisted, Lutyens was prepared to accept Jacob's help "as a walking dictionary on Indian detail," for he knew that otherwise he might himself be denied the Delhi commission. But from the beginning he intrigued to get Jacob "shoved," and he exulted in "the dear thing's" resignation in August 1913, six months after Jacob, Baker, and himself had been jointly named as architects of New Delhi.³⁹

Throughout the controversy over style Lutyens remained unshakably committed to the beaux-arts classicism that, since his conversion in 1903, he had adopted as his own (fig. 49). For Lutyens this classicism, measured by its own standards of aesthetic perfection, allowed of no tampering in order to secure some political effect. "Would Wren," he wrote, "(had he gone to Australia) have burnt his knowledge and experience to produce a marsupial style—thought to reflect the character of her aborigines?" As he told Baker, in the opening round of the argument that was later to destroy their friendship, "You cannot play originality with the [classical] Orders. They have to be so digested that there is nothing



49. Sketch by Edwin Lutyens of an Indo-Saracenic palace. Lutyens's deprecatory dismissal of any attempt to build an Indo-Saracenic New Delhi is evident in this sketch,

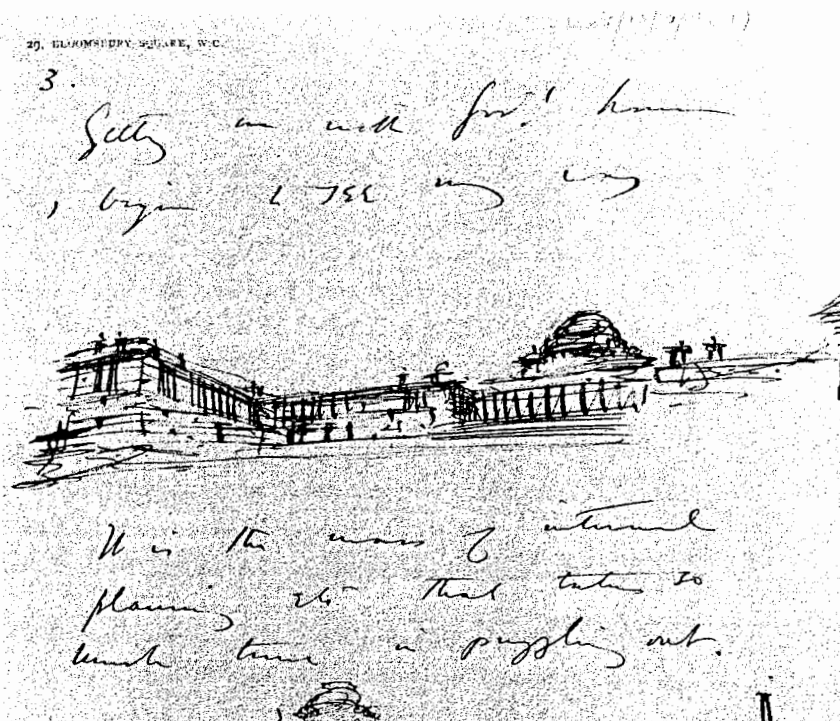
which shows an exuberantly Oriental viceroy's palace, described as "Moghul tush," paired with the royal family dressed in Eastern garb. Letter to his wife, 6 September 1912,

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but essence left. When right they are curiously lovely—unalterable as plant forms. . . . The perfection of the Order is far nearer nature than anything produced on impulse or accident-wise.”⁴⁰

None of this meant, however, that the British ought to reproduce in India “the almost sterile stability of the English classical style.” Classical architecture, as it had evolved over the centuries, had grown to accommodate the character of the societies in which it had taken root. From its beginnings among those “intellectual giants” the Greeks, the “torch” of classicism, as Lutyens had written in 1903, had been passed first to the Romans, then to the Italians of the Renaissance, and finally to Wren, who “made it sane for England.” Lutyens saw his task as being to “hand on that torch and make it sane for India, and Indian in its character.” Yet this could not be done, he argued, as men like Hardinge conceived, “by capturing Indian details and inserting their features, like hanging pictures on a wall.” An “orientalised” classicism was not the answer. If only, he wrote despairingly of Hardinge and of Sir George Clarke, then at work on the Gateway of India in Bombay, instead of trying to create “a mixture to please all parties,” they would “build well and consider the climate and conditions—and realise that these are the paramount objects to aim for and not treat poor architecture as a mere wall paper it would be easier.”⁴¹

Lutyens appreciated at the outset that to design New Delhi as he sought would be “no easy task.” But the way at least was clear (fig. 50). One began, not, like Hardinge, with ornament, but rather with a clearly defined “constructional purpose.” The system adopted was then “carried throughout the whole fabric, according to the logical demands of the material used.” Such a conception of architecture brought Lutyens into conflict not only with the viceroy but with his colleague, Herbert Baker. Even where the two were in agreement, as in opposing Hardinge’s preference for the pointed arch, the arguments each used betrayed their differing perspectives. As Lutyens wrote, “One cannot tinker with the round arch. God did not make the Eastern rainbow pointed to show His wide sympathies. Point your arch ever so little, it ceases to be round and its quality goes.” Baker at once replied, “You must recognize the political standpoint in a political capital. . . . And you get your way best by doing so, and showing that there are more vital things than the mere accidental shape of an arch. Ungeometrical arches and vaults in conjunction do not



50. Lutyens's first sketches of the Viceroy's House in letter to his wife of 16 September 1912. Above the first sketch he

writes, "I am getting on with Govt. House and begin to see my way." Below he dismisses chatris as "stupid useless things." Reproduced by

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express a scientific logical government which the Government of India is or should be. That is the line of attack I think. Give them Indian sentiment where it does not conflict with grand principles, as the Government should do."⁴²

Three years later, in 1916, with construction under way, the two architects' disagreements blossomed forth for all the world to see in the famous "gradient" controversy. The conflict had its origins in the decision, taken in March 1913 at Baker's initiative, to place the secretariat buildings, as well as the Viceroy's House, atop Raisina Hill. Baker's objectives were, as usual, political in nature. He conceived that the viceroy ought not, as though he were a despot, to live "aloof and aloft from his

ministers of government.” Instead, in order to “give architectural expression to a common dignity and distinction in the instrument of government as a united whole,” the secretariats should sit upon the same elevated platform as the viceroy’s residence. Similar motives had led him, as we have seen, to create an “acropolis” capital at Pretoria, where the Union Buildings on Meintjes Kop, raised high above the people below, gave “dignity and beauty to the instrument of government.”⁴³

Lutyens had from the outset intended the viceregal mansion, as the axial point of his overall scheme for the layout of New Delhi, not only to be raised upon Raisina Hill, but to be visible along the entire length of the ceremonial King’s Way that reached eastward toward Indraprastha. Placed far back, however, behind the secretariats at the crest of the hill, the Viceroy’s House would be partially hidden from view as one approached the hill and ascended steeply up its slope. For Baker this was a matter of no great moment. Lutyens, by contrast, once he had discovered its consequences, fought unrelentingly to have the vista restored by the excavation of a deep trench into the hillside past the secretariats, so that the road could ascend at a lesser gradient and the Viceroy’s House remain visible at its end. When he was refused he broke angrily with Baker, whom he accused of having deceived him in drawing up the plans for the siting of the secretariats.

This obstinate struggle, against nearly hopeless odds, was not just a mark of Lutyens’s personal vanity. It testified rather to his enduring rejection of an architecture based upon what he saw as “sentiment.” Whether it took the shape of a search for an “orientalised” classicism or the hill-top siting of the secretariats, Baker’s insistence that “content in art” was “of the greatest importance” and ought to be expressed in architecture, evoked but little sympathy from his collaborator at Delhi. “I really do believe,” he wrote disparagingly of Baker in 1920, “his work all centers round and is built on phrases that will sound well with his Round Table friends!!” What Baker needed, Lutyens growled, was “a little more of the T square, and a little less of the Round Table.”⁴⁴ At Delhi use of the “T square” meant for Lutyens, above all else, that the Viceroy’s House, as the axial point of an ordered symmetry, must remain always visible.

Lutyens’s beaux-arts classicism did not of course exclude an appreciation of empire. Indeed, to the contrary, the beaux-arts tradition itself had, from its earliest days, defined the European representation of empire. The balance and symmetry of an ordered design, in this conception,

announced a world ruled justly by a disinterested elite, while an ordered rule, imposed from above, complemented, and to a large degree alone made possible such a design. Hence Lutyens was, not surprisingly, as he wrote his wife, "awfully impressed" with the Indian Civil Service and the "unselfishness" of the government. Indeed, like so many late-Victorian intellectuals, appalled by Gladstonian "sentimentality," Lutyens found the authoritarianism of empire more attractive than a democratic England, where "the rot of party and votes seems like some slow sweet poison to spoilt children." Before he had been in India a month, in April 1912, he wrote that "India, like Africa, makes one very Tory and pre-Tory Feudal!"⁴⁵

Yet, unlike Baker, whose architecture always had as its sole purpose the service of the Empire, Lutyens sought in Delhi not simply to create an architecture of empire, but to develop for India "some new sense of architectural construction adapted to her crafts" and so initiate "what may become a new and inspiring period in the history of her art." Inevitably, as the ideals of imperialism informed so much of his vision, the representation of the Raj lay at the heart of this enterprise; but Lutyens's architecture, as he set out "to express modern India in stone," was intended nevertheless to transcend such limitations. It was not, in his view, to be "mere wall paper."⁴⁶

His conception of New Delhi brought Lutyens into conflict not only with those who sought an "orientalised" classicism, but with those, like Havell, who saw in the design of the new capital an opportunity for India's artisans to display their traditional crafts. Initially, to meet the concerns of those artists and scholars in England who had signed the February 1913 petition, and their supporters in the Indian art schools, most prominent among them Percy Brown, Havell's successor at Calcutta, the Indian government had proposed the organization of a studio, run by Indian master craftsmen, to take responsibility for ornamenting the new buildings. At no time, however, did even Hardinge have much enthusiasm for this scheme. When Swinton Jacob resigned in August 1913, he made no effort either to appoint a successor from Britain or to place an Indian in charge of decorative work; and he spoke of the proposed Studio of Indian Arts, already downgraded to a technical workshop, as mere "eyewash," designed to placate public opinion. For himself, Lutyens had never possessed much sympathy for the Indian craftsman, or *mistri*, whom he mockingly labeled the "mystery man." Baker alone had cherished the idea of seeing the surfaces of his buildings enriched by Indian

“symbolism, heraldry, history, and philosophy so far as these can be embodied in art.” Hence, when the art studio fell victim to the wartime drive for economy, few mourned its demise. By 1914 the arts and crafts movement in India had run its course.⁴⁷

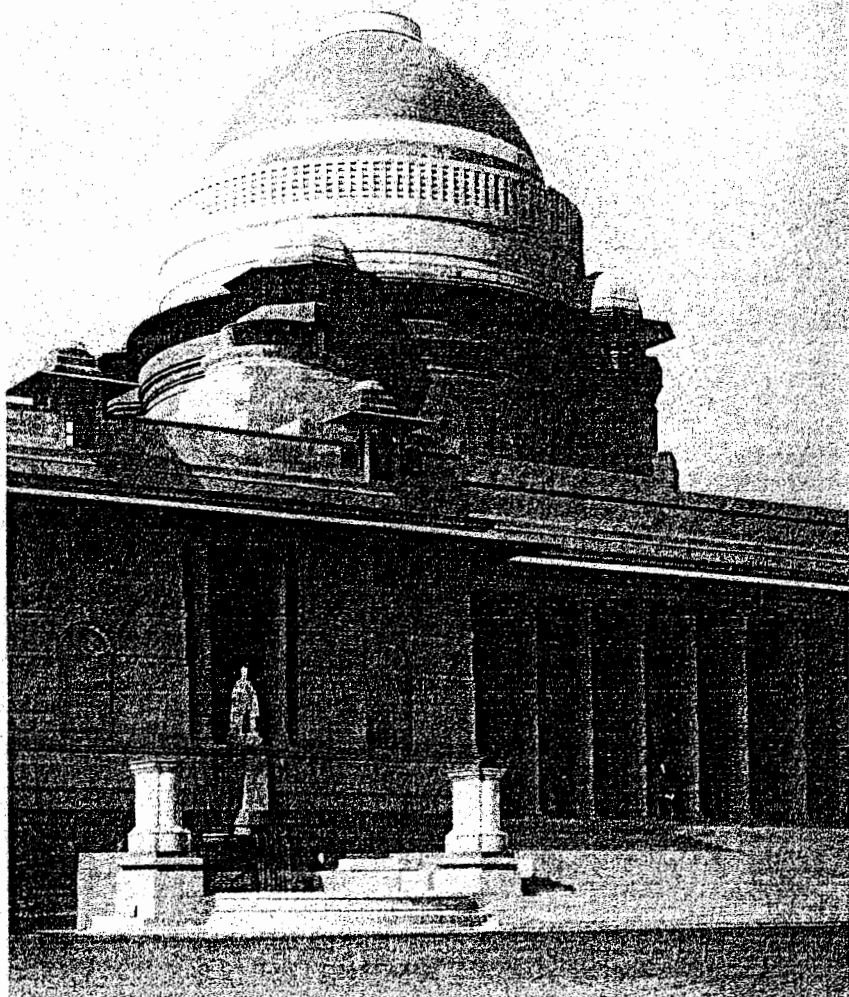
As he set out to embody his vision in stone Lutyens had of necessity to come to terms with “Oriental” architecture. He could not, if he were to incorporate its elements in his design, dismiss it out of hand, as he had done with such vehemence during his early days in India. He first found inspiration for this enterprise, no doubt because of its greater familiarity, in the architecture of Spain. The buildings there, he told Hardinge in September 1912, were “Italian with a wonderful elusive flavour of the Moor,” and so pointed the way “as to how to create a competent style without merely borrowing unassimilated forms.” Others too had seen in this architecture a useful model for the building of New Delhi. The *Builder*, hostile to Havell’s Indic enthusiasms, suggested following the example of the colonial Spanish in Mexico and Central America, where a Renaissance motif was combined with detail work supplied by indigenous craftsmen. Lord Curzon, writing to the *Times* in October 1912, although admitting that the obvious first choice was the “colonial adaptation of the Palladian style” that had shaped Government House, Calcutta, and his own Victoria Memorial, then under construction in Calcutta, acknowledged nevertheless that this style, in its “severe and sometimes inartistic simplicity,” would be inappropriate for the new capital, which deserved a “richer and more imaginative variant of the classical conception.” Best of all, he said, “because it was largely affected by Oriental ideas, was the Renaissance architecture of Spain, some of the most exquisite features of which are a visible legacy from the Moors.”⁴⁸

Lutyens had no intention, however, of transplanting Spanish architecture to India. Its distinctive character, he wrote, “now belongs to Spain alone.” Spanish architecture was important because it showed him the way to meld—not to “graft”—“the flavour of the Moor” into the fabric of Western classicism. His objective was to follow the “logic” that had led to Spanish architecture, not to copy its results. For him this “logic” involved, as we have seen in the letters he wrote Baker at the beginning of their collaboration, a process of “digesting” the classical forms so that only their “essence” remained, and then reconstituting them so that they comprehended within themselves indigenous ornament and detail. In so doing, as he turned to his work in Delhi, Lutyens was led inevitably to look more favorably on India’s historic architecture. As Hardinge wrote,

with relief, in January 1913, "Since Lutyens' return to India," for his second tour, "I have found him much more adaptable . . . quite ready to adopt Indian architectural styles."⁴⁹

By nearly universal agreement the Viceroy's House, as finally constructed, successfully realized Lutyens's central objective: that of assimilating Indic forms, rigorously controlled and subordinated, within a European classical idiom to create an architecture expressive of the ideals of the British Empire (fig. 51). The massive dome and gigantic colonnades, their authority derived from the traditions of European classicism, marked out clearly Britain's sovereignty over the Indian subcontinent. The Indic features of the structure were equally visible and yet transformed. Most prominent was a *chajja*, jutting forth eight feet from the wall face, that encircled the entire building. Its sunlit edge, with the deep band of shadow beneath, linked the building's fronts and reinforced the overall pattern of horizontality defined by its long low lines. *Chattris*, despite Lutyens's early dismissal of them as "stupid useless things," march along the roof line and cluster around the base of the dome. Unlike Baker's on the nearby secretariats, however, Lutyens's *chattris* are not drawn from any existing model, but represent his reinterpretation of the basic form. The banded red sandstone of which the building was constructed further emphasized the horizontal lines of the *chajja* and recalled as well the stone plinths of neighboring Muslim tombs. Further Indic elements were almost playfully introduced, among them a cobra fountain and a colonnade of trabeated arches in the kitchen entrance.⁵⁰

Yet, despite this stunning design, Lutyens was no more able than Baker or Havell to create an architecture that could resolve the fundamental problems confronting the British Empire in the twentieth century. Of these the most obvious was the slow, but inevitable, loss of British control over India. Indeed, the increasing ineffectuality of the Raj was visible for all to see in Delhi itself when a bomb, thrown by a revolutionary nationalist, severely wounded Lord Hardinge during his December 1912 state entry into the new capital. Like so much Edwardian building elsewhere, the product of an anxious Britain determined to assert itself against newly powerful rivals, the monumental classicism of the Viceroy's House, with its huge dome and seemingly endless ranks of columns, can be seen as a device to mask a growing insecurity by shouting forth an assertive magnificence. Sheer size, so this mammoth palace seemed to say, could help obscure, if not deny altogether, the waning of Britain's authority over its premier dependency.



51. Viceroy's House, New Delhi. Note the use of Indic forms, including the overhanging *chajja*, the clustered *chattris*, and railing

derived from Sanchi around the base of the dome. Photograph courtesy of the British Architectural Library, RIBA, London.

Lutyens's use of Indic features too, while innovative, reflected the loss of imperial self-confidence. Men like Swinton Jacob had conceived of the British as latter-day Mughal emperors ruling over Hindu and Muslim communities whose distinctive architectural styles they could shape to the needs of their own Raj. Lutyens, unsympathetic to this "silly Moghul-Hindu stuff," sought instead to sidestep the issue. Many of his Indic designs, such as the *chattris* of the Viceroy's House, were created of abstract forms not directly related to India's past; for others he sought inspiration in ancient Buddhist building. The dome itself, though unique in its black color, takes its shape not, like Baker's at the secretariat, from Wren's work in England, but from the great stupa at Sanchi, begun in the third century B.C. The drum of the dome too was girt with a railing reminiscent of the one surrounding the stupa, while for the Great Place at the foot of Raisina Hill Lutyens designed a railing modeled closely on that at Sanchi.

As we have seen, the British had always regarded the great Buddhist monuments, in large part because of their antiquity, as the high point of India's historic architecture. Yet their forms had been but rarely incorporated in British building. Buddhism had, after all, no adherents in Victorian India; and so its architecture, unlike the use of "Hindu" and "Muslim" forms, would not proclaim the mastery of the Raj over the peoples of the subcontinent. For Lutyens, however, the Buddhist stupas, as an aesthetically satisfying Indian "classical" architecture, provided a way of evading the communal tangle of Hindu and Muslim: a tangle that the British, for all their imperial pretension, could not resolve, and indeed had exacerbated. Rather like Hardinge's preference for the "simple" style of Mandu, Lutyens's use of Buddhist forms acknowledged that Britain, if not yet ready to abandon altogether its authority over the subcontinent, had nevertheless abdicated its claim to a superior knowledge of India's peoples and its past.

Lutyens's architecture had furthermore, like that of Havell and Baker, no place for the English-educated Indian. Though he rejected the "constructed" language of the Indo-Saracenic tradition, he created no alternative. As a result, perhaps, Lutyens despaired of the future of India. As he wrote to his wife in December 1912, "I suppose we shall give up India, leave our people in the lurch, as they have done in South Africa. . . . Government will get into the hands of talkers and they [the Indians] will be governed by phrases, as we are, and no one will be a whit the better and a

good many a good deal worse." Nor did such despondency encourage him to take educated Indians into his confidence. When shown the plans of Ajmal Khan's proposed college of Islamic medicine, by its "Mohammedan architect," Ashiq Hussain, he retorted only that "it is all humbug this Indian architect playing to be Indian and adopting with glee all that is bad in Western methods of design."⁵¹

In the early days of their collaboration Baker flattered Lutyens that he might become a great architect of empire. "In 2000 years," he wrote him, when the Delhi appointment was announced, "there must be an Imperial Lutyens tradition in Indian architecture, as there now clings a memory of Alexander."⁵² Lutyens readily joined with Baker in the cry of "Hurrah for despotism!" and his viceregal palace, together with his beaux-arts layout for New Delhi, embodied on a grand scale an ideal of empire. Yet Lutyens's triumph was uniquely personal. Although his individual genius enabled him to transcend the stylistic limitations of an "orientalised" classicism, the Viceroy's House did not point the way toward a new architecture that might define a new relationship between India and Britain. Confined within the classic traditions of European imperialism, it led, inevitably, nowhere.