

Modern Architecture - India

Indian Architecture 18th century onward

Before the arrival of British in India, traditional architecture involved the creation of spectacular sculptural forms hewn out of stone. The aim of building such architectural monuments was glorification. In contrast, the every-day needs of a common man were ruthlessly neglected.

Then the British arrived on the scene, it was through them that the first introduction to elementary modern building construction and planning was introduced into India. Their aim, however, was to house their organisations, and their people and whatever was necessary to control an empire as big as India. Apart from self-serving military cantonments and civil lines, they also left the basic problems well alone.

In contemporary architecture, we have marched ahead and have built an impressive number of houses and other buildings which can cater to needs of the common man and our society at large. In the process, there have been attempts to bring us closer to the building of forms more suitable for the Indian climate and socio-economic conditions.

Colonial Architecture

The colonial architecture spanning about 150 to 200 years under the British Empire attained its golden age in the second half of the 19th century, representing an important phase in the modernization of the country, modification of a stark medieval lifestyle got to ultimately become a democratic one at the dawn of Independence in 1947.

Colonial architecture in India manifests the penetration of colonial ideas/policies and their impact on local institutions, ways of life and building processes which created situations of confrontation between the foreign and indigenous values.

Characteristics of Colonial architecture

- The British viewed themselves as the successors to Mughals and used architectural style as a symbol of power.
- The buildings they constructed in India were the direct reflection of their achievements in architecture back home.
- The aim of colonial architecture under British rule was to build structures to house their people and their organisations to control Indian empire.
- Under colonial architecture, new residential areas like Civil Lines and Cantonments came up in towns.

- Colonial architectural style in British India witnessed another feature of rare usage of stone especially marble.
- Later stone was replaced by brick as the prime material of British architectures in India, slate, machine-made tiles and steel girders came in vogue, galvanised iron revolutionised the Anglo-Indian roof.

Different Colonial Architectural Styles

Neo-classical Style

- This architectural style is reflected in the late 19th century structures in British India.
- It is an imitation of the classical Greeko-Roman style of architecture.
- It involved recreation, revival, re-adaptation of building architecture in ancient Greece and Rome.
- The Mediterranean origins of this architecture were thought to be suitable for Indian tropical climate.
- It was characterised by the construction of geometrical structures fronted with lofty pillars.

- An early example of this style is Town Hall in Bombay.

Neo-Gothic Style

- The neo-Gothic style was a revival of the early Gothic style of architecture which had its roots in buildings, especially churches, built in northern Europe during the medieval period.
- It was characterised by high-pitched roofs, pointed arches and detailed decoration.
- This style was adapted for building infrastructure in Bombay.
- An impressive group of buildings facing the seafront including the Secretariat, University of Bombay and High Court were all built in this style.

- Many Indian merchants gave money for some of these buildings. They were happy to adopt the neo-Gothic style since they believed it was progressive and would help make Bombay, a modern city.
- The British invested a lot in the design and construction of railway stations in this style, an example of which is Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai.

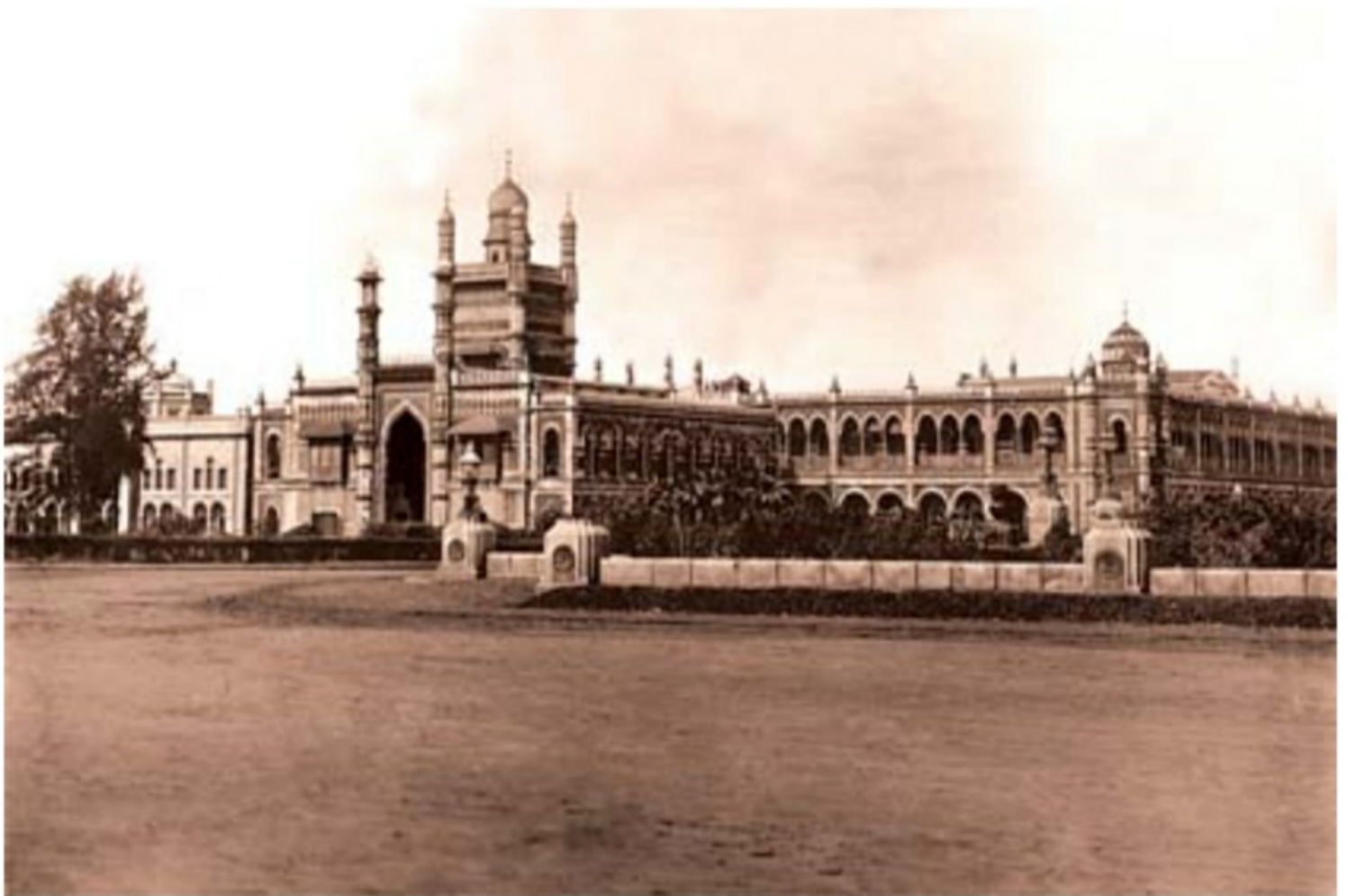


Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus,
Mumbai

Indo-Saracenic Revival Style

- It was a hybrid of Indian and European style which developed in an early twentieth century.
- Indo was shorthand for Hindu and Saracen was a term Europeans used to designate Muslim.
- The Indo-Saracenic revival architecture drew elements from native Indo-Islamic architecture and combined it with Neo-Classical styles favoured in Victorian Britain.
- The inspiration for this style was medieval buildings in India with their domes, chhatris, jalis, and arches etc.

- Chepauk Palace situated in Chennai (erstwhile Madras) was the first Indo-Saracenic revival building.
- The Gateway of India is the most famous example of this style. The industrialist Jamsetji Tata built the Taj Mahal Hotel in the similar style.



Chepauk Palace, Chennai

Art-Deco Style

- Art Deco in India (and especially in Mumbai) evolved into a unique style that came to be called Deco-Saracenic.
- Essentially, it was a combination of the Islamic and the Hindu architectural styles.
- Art Deco is one of Mumbai's least noticed architectural styles, though Mumbai and its suburbs possibly have the largest number of Art Deco buildings in the world.

- Deco details touch every architectural aspect flooring, wood panelling, railings, weather shades, verandahs, balconies and facades that are very airy and built in stepped -back style, etc.
- The interiors have Victorian influences while the exterior was Indian.
- Art Deco architecture in Mumbai developed during the 1930s and produced distinctly angular shaped buildings with facades.

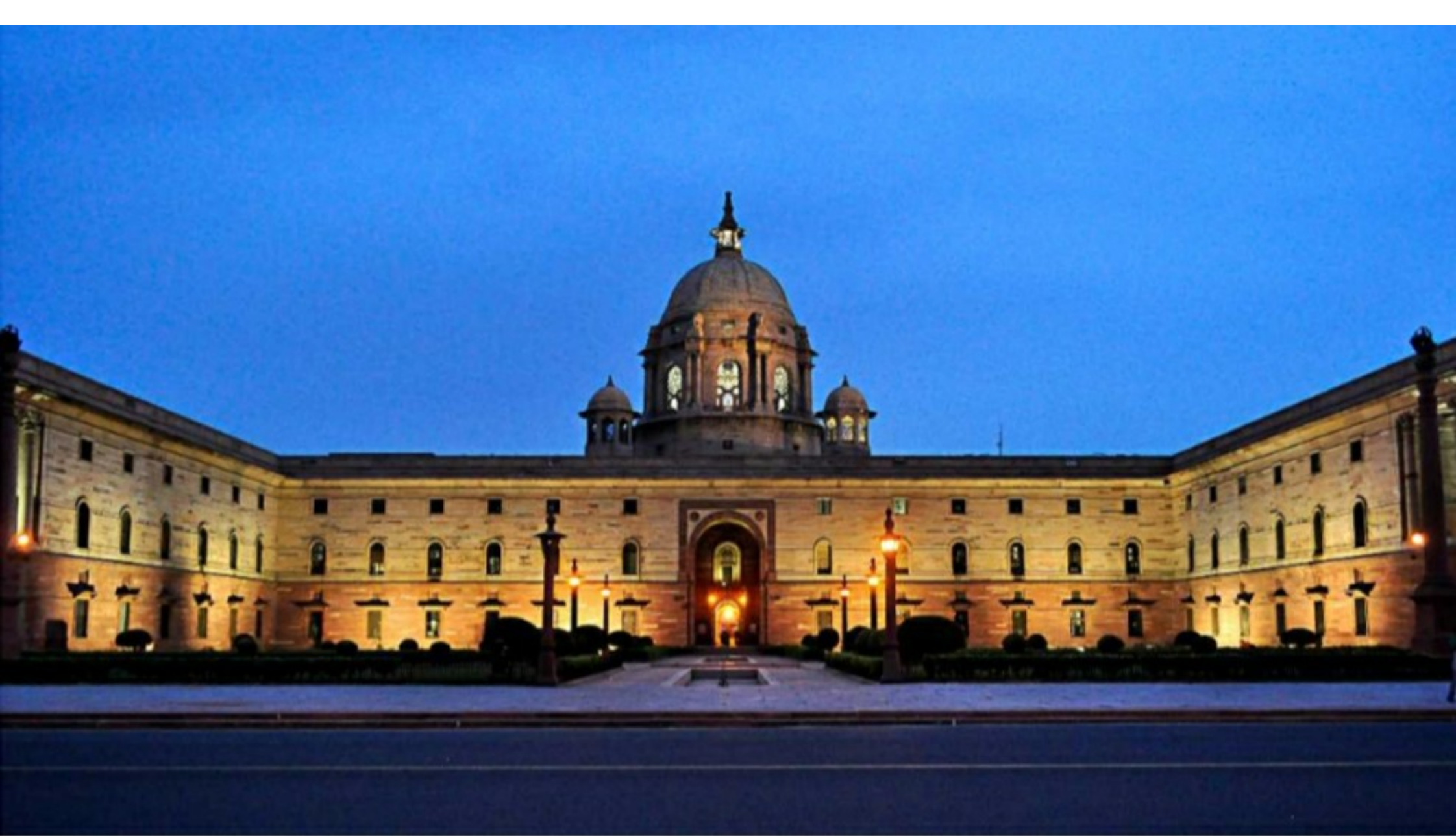
- The Art Deco style is also extremely popular amongst various Cinema halls that sprung up in the early to mid 20th Century including Metro Cinema, Eros Cinema etc.
- Some examples of this style are - The Mahalakshmi Temple, Regal Cinema, The High Court building in Mumbai

Contributions of Sir Edwin Lutyen and Sir Herbert Baker

- The British government, experiencing a sense of crisis due to rising anti-imperialist wave in India, declared Delhi to be its new capital in 1911.
- Thus the British leading architects Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker were invited to design the city of New Delhi and its important edifices.

- The architects designed a monumental urban street complex that was essentially alien to Indian cities.
- Their architectural style involved a fusion of classical European and Indian elements.
- Lavish colonnades, open verandas, tall, slender windows, chhajjas (wide roof overhangs) and cornices jaalis (circular stone apertures) and chhatris (free-standing pavilions) were used at the same time as decorative elements from typical historic Indian architecture.

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- Lutyen designed Rashtrapati Bhavan, formerly the Viceroy's residence. It is built of sandstone and has design features like canopies and jaali from Rajasthan
 - Lutyen designed many other monuments in Delhi including India gate. In recognition of his contributions, New Delhi is also known as Lutyens Delhi.
 - Similarly, Baker, who came to India to work with Lutyen, had also designed many buildings in New Delhi such as Central Secretariat building, Parliament House, Bungalows of MPs etc.



Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi

ARCHITECTURE AFTER THE INDEPENDENCE

India became independent from the British Empire in 1947 and Indian architecture immediately parted from European classical styles and rushed into modernism. Modern Indian architecture still honours and upholds the traditions of India, but the architectural form works to better meet the needs of modern-day society. Modern Indian architecture reflects its various socio-cultural sensibilities which vary from region to region.

Characteristics of post-independence architecture

- Today we see a traditional character in Indian architecture, but with modern form and style.
- Buildings are less ornate and more utilitarian and expressive in form.
- Building materials used in construction are a basic and locally available but cutting edge. The use of steel and glass to erect innovative building forms is very popular and striking in the landscape.
- Urban centres in India are booming, bringing along with it a rise in population and property demand.

- High rise buildings have also become very common in these dense urban areas where space must be maximized.
- Another modern characteristic in India is building of structures which are more responsive to its ecology and climate.
- Also, many architects in India including Laurie Baker and Charles Correa have concerned themselves with building low-cost housing for poor households.

Architects of Modern India

Le Corbusier

- He was a Switzerland born French architect
- Le Corbusier's largest and most ambitious project was the design of Chandigarh.
- It was one of the early planned cities in post-independence India. The master-plan for Chandigarh was prepared by Le Corbusier.
- Chandigarh's Capitol Complex, designed by Corbusier was declared by UNESCO as World Heritage in 2016.

- Le Corbusier's design called for the use of raw concrete, whose surface not smoothed or polished and which showed the marks of the forms in which it dried.
- Not only his radical reimagination of urban life left its imprint all over the world, but also the architectural work of Le Corbusier is an outstanding contribution to the Modern Movement in Indian architecture.

MOVEMENTS IN INDIAN ARCHITECTURE.

Post-1947, Indian architecture was at a standstill in terms of progression; there was no unique identity being formed.

However, when the Indian Punjab government took on world famous architect Le Corbusier to design the city of Chandigarh, an architectural breakthrough began.

Architects working in India began to draw inspiration in the years following Le Corbusier's work, and thus began a more rapid evolution of modern architecture.



Capitol complex, Chandigarh

B V Doshi

- He is considered an important figure of South Asian architecture and noted for his unfathomable contributions to the evolution of architectural discourse in India
- He contributed significantly in the development of modern Indian architecture
- In his initial years, he worked for Le Corbusier in his projects
- His noted works include Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, Amdavad ni Gufa and Tagore Hall in Ahmadabad etc.

CHARLES CORREA

- He is an Indian architect
- Correa was a major figure in contemporary Indian architecture. With his extraordinary and inspiring designs, he played a pivotal role in the creation of post-Independence Indian architecture.
- He is known for his adaptation of Modernist tenets to local climates and building styles.
- In the realm of urban planning, he is particularly noted for his sensitivity to the needs of the urban poor and for his use of traditional methods and materials.

- Correa's work in India shows a careful fusion of local vernacular tradition with a modernist approach
- Correa's urban planning projects and land use planning present a solution to third world problems and try to go beyond that
- His famous works in India include Mahatma Gandhi Memorial in Ahmedabad, the Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur, the planning of Navi Mumbai etc.

Laurie Baker

- He was a British-born Indian architect. He became an Indian citizen in 1989.
- He was Influenced by Mahatma Gandhi in his life and work
- Due to his social and humanitarian efforts to bring architecture and design to the common man, his belief in simplicity in design and in life, he has been called the "Gandhi of architecture."
- His life s work follows economical, ecological and sustainable criteria in building and is devoted to people in lower income groups.

- He is known for his initiatives in cost-effective energy-efficient architecture and designs that maximized space, ventilation and light
- He promoted the revival of regional building practices and use of local materials
- He was a pioneer of sustainable architecture as well as organic architecture

Indian traditional architecture has produced many architectural marvels which are admired the world over. In comparison to traditional architecture, modern Indian architecture is a new phenomenon and it has been consistently evolving not only to produce architectural marvels like Lotus temple, planned cities etc. but also to tackle the contemporary needs and challenges of our society like low-cost housing, energy efficient and climate responsive architecture etc.