

CONNAUGHT PLACE

and its surroundings





A glance at any map of Delhi, drawn after the 1920s, will show clearly what is probably the most prominent landmark of Delhi, the distinctive wheel-like structure of Connaught Place. Although it's been officially renamed Rajiv Chowk, after India's former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, Connaught Place continues to be referred to by its original, colonial name or by its popular acronym, CP.

While Connaught Place itself is one of the city's largest and most important commercial and business districts, the area surrounding this hub is equally interesting. Dotted across this stretch are a number of significant buildings (many of which formed part of Lutyens' Delhi).

In addition, there are places of worship, important government offices, and even a few interesting medieval structures.

Initially a part of the Delhi Ridge, this area was an expanse of keekar trees, home to jackals and wild pigs. This was where the rich and powerful of Delhi came to hunt partridge on the weekends and devotees came to worship at the Hanuman Temple.

At the Delhi Durbar of December 1911, King George V publicly announced the decision to shift India's capital from Calcutta to Delhi. Along with that came the announcement that a 'new city'—New Delhi—would be built. Although the royal couple did lay the foundation stone for New Delhi at the place where the Durbar was held (Coronation Park),



subsequent discussions and studies revealed that a far more suitable site for the laying out of this grand new city lay to the south of Coronation Park.

An important part of the city's plan was to create a central business district that would connect New Delhi to the older city. W. H. Nicholls, the Chief Architect of the Delhi Committee, proposed the creation of a circular symmetric arcade that would fit into the larger scheme of the city. The result was a vast, circular colonnaded arcade that houses shops, restaurants, cinemas, and more.

On the roads leading out of Connaught Place are other equally important buildings. There are, for example, pre-Independence buildings like the Eastern and Western Courts; the Imperial Hotel and, further afield, colonial buildings like the Sacred Heart Cathedral, the Gole Dak-khana in front of it, and Gole Market.

Not that this area is wholly and completely of twentieth century vintage.

Scattered across it, and in an often unusual but pleasing juxtaposition of old and new, are older monuments like Agrasen ki Baoli, a step-well dating back to the fifteenth century and the impressive observatory known as Jantar Mantar, built in the eighteenth century. Though they do not look as old as either the baoli (step-well) or the observatory, Hanuman Mandir and Gurudwara Bangla Sahib too are medieval buildings that were already in existence when Connaught Place came into being.

1. CONNAUGHT PLACE – THE COMMERCIAL HUB

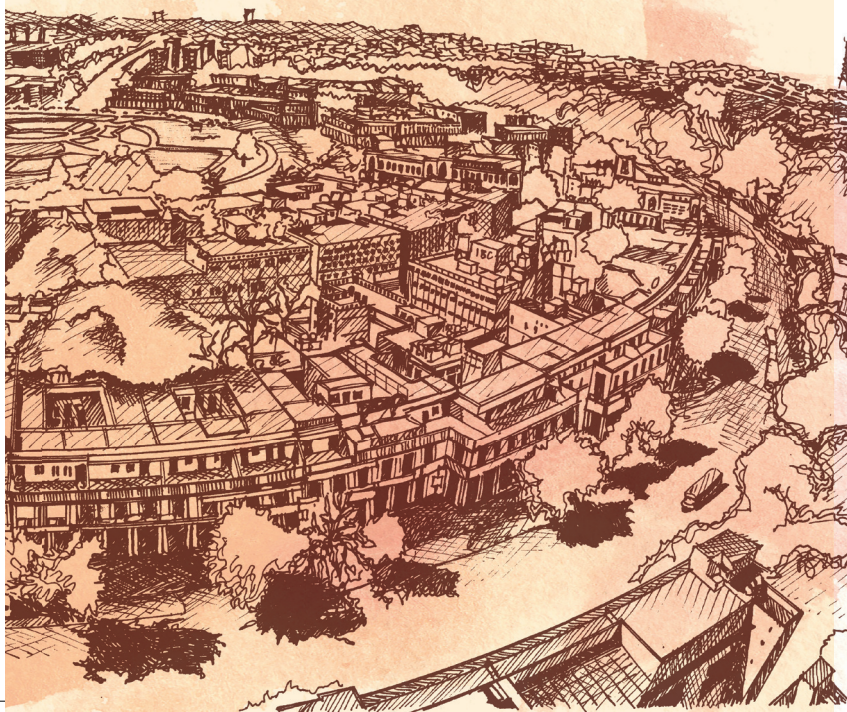
Connaught Place was envisaged as a combination of commercial and residential buildings, modelled on the Royal Crescent in Bath, England. The plan was a two-storeyed open colonnaded structure where the ground floor would be taken up by commercial establishments while the floor above would be given over to residents.

In AD 1928, when land was finally allotted for the construction of this arcade, W. H. Nicholls (who had proposed the construction of the complex) had left; Connaught Place, therefore, was designed by R. T. Russell, the Chief Architect of the Public Works Department (PWD). The construction of this complex began in 1929, and continued over the next five years. By the time it was finally opened, it consisted of two concentric circles of buildings, forming three wheel-like roads: the Inner Circle, the Middle Circle, and the Outer Circle. Forming the 'spokes' of the wheels were seven radial roads; these were initially supposed to lie under archways that linked the different blocks of the complex. The concept of the archways was eventually dropped to provide a more impressive appearance to the area. The complex was named after the Duke of Connaught (uncle to King George V), who had visited Delhi in 1921.



Delhi's modern elite, the wealthy and powerful British and Indians who could afford houses in the area surrounding nearby King's Way (modern Rajpath), were the primary patrons of Connaught Place in its early days. To cater to them, therefore, an array of shops and establishments opened. Among the earliest (and still extant) was Wenger's, which started as a confectionery shop named Spencer's at Kashmiri Gate. When Connaught Place opened, the shop, now owned by a Swiss couple named Wenger, moved to Connaught Place. Over the years, this became New Delhi's largest and most fashionable restaurant. The Wenger's ballroom, glittering with imported chandeliers, with music provided by a live band, and an array of fancy foods on offer, was the place to be seen at in town.

Also among the first shops to open in Connaught Place was the toy store of Ram Chandra and Sons (still owned and run by the same family), which opened in 1935; Vaish Tailors, specializing in western attire for men; the Jain Book Agency, opened by Lala Shanti Pershad Jain in 1935 (the shop is even today considered a one-stop shop for government-related and institutional publications); and the city's first art gallery, Dhoomi Mal Art Gallery, set up in 1936. Besides hosting exhibitions by prominent artists such as K. S. Kulkarni, Vimal Dasgupta, and Sailoz Mookherjee, the gallery acted as a venue for artists and art lovers to interact.



If opportunities for dining out and shopping were provided here, so too was entertainment. The first cinema theatre to open its doors in Connaught Place was Regal, built by the architect Walter Sykes George and inaugurated in 1932. Besides showing 'moving pictures', Regal also hosted ballet and theatre performances, and concerts. A year later, in 1933, the Plaza (designed by R. T. Russell, with a classical façade of columns) opened but sadly, in 1967, the columns were covered over with a plain slab of stone. The other cinema halls in Connaught Place – Odeon, Rivoli, and the Indian Talkie House – opened in 1938.

Over time, Connaught Place became more approachable and accessible to a wider spectrum of patrons. Besides the fashionable elite who had been its first clientele, it began catering to those who wanted a more home-grown, familiar environment. For instance, the United Coffee House (UCH) in B Block was launched in 1942 by the Kalras to serve snacks such as *samosas*, *pakor*as, *golibhaje*, and sandwiches, besides the coffee it was named for. In 1948, the Embassy restaurant was opened, which, along with the Indian restaurant Kwality, still prides itself on serving specialties that have featured on their menus for all these decades.

Among the other popular eateries of early Connaught Place were Gaylord and Davicos—the latter, on the first floor of Regal cinema, was famous for its sizzlers, but has now shut down.

In the post-Independence era, many changes and additions were made to Connaught Place. The centre of the complex, the Inner Circle, had started off as an open space; in the late 1970s, this was filled up by constructing an underground market, Palika



Bazaar, which spreads out all the way to the Outer Circle. The parking lot and small garden above ground are a far cry from the hustle and bustle of Palika Bazaar itself. The underground market is chockfull of small shops and stalls that sell everything imaginable in the way of clothing and fashion accessories, electronics, DVDs and CDs, computer hardware and software, and so on. Most of what's on sale is at throwaway prices, but not all of it is authentic—so be warned.

Also an important part of Connaught Place is the aptly-named Central Park, once home to fountains and gulmohar trees, now renovated and with an amphitheatre and water bodies added (the trees, unfortunately, have been done away with). The Central Park is one of Delhi's major venues for concerts and cultural events.

Overlooking Central Park and the Georgian buildings of Connaught Place are the newer structures that have risen around the complex, mainly in the 1980s and after. There is, for instance, the red sandstone-and-glass edifice of the Jeevan Bharati Building (the LIC building) designed by Charles Correa in 1986. On Janpath is the Jawahar Vyapar Bhavan, an architecturally



interesting building with cantilevers and octagonal windows built into its design. The Jawahar Vyapar Bhavan is home to the state-run Cottage Industries Emporium, a good place to buy authentic handicrafts from all across India.

Although Connaught Place had been originally planned as partly residential (the first floor apartments of the circular arcades were almost fully occupied by 1938), today very few residents remain; nearly all of the area is a commercial district. The commerce spreads out to the surrounding roads as well. Barakhamba Road (home to the glass-and-concrete buildings of Statesman House and Gopaldas Bhavan) and Kasturba Gandhi Marg, for example, consist entirely of office buildings that house banks, airlines, media companies and other corporations. Kasturba Gandhi Marg is also home to the American Center and the British Council building (the latter designed by Charles Correa), both of which host periodic cultural and literary events and short-term programmes, besides offering library facilities, information on scholarships, and more. A similar function (in this case for German cultural affairs) is performed by the Max Mueller Bhavan, also situated on Kasturba Gandhi Marg, in a Lutyens-era bungalow.

The significance of Connaught Place as a commercial and cultural hub was the main reason for its being the focus of extensive restoration prior to the Delhi Commonwealth Games in 2010. Today, despite the mushrooming of several other commercial areas in other parts of Delhi, Connaught Place remains almost synonymous with 'central Delhi'. Little wonder, then, that when the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) was planning its network, Connaught Place (or, strictly speaking, Rajiv Chowk) was chosen to be the hub of the network.

Connaught Place and Palika Bazaar: Timings: 11.00 am–10.00 pm, Sunday and national holidays closed, though restaurants do remain open till later.

2. GOLE MARKET

Gole Market (literally, 'the round market') isn't a technically correct description for this market, since it's not really circular. Instead, its architect, G. Bloomfield, designed it as a twelve-sided ring surrounding an open central courtyard. Six entrances, in the form of semi-circular arched gateways, pierce the ring, leading into Gole Market. On the southern edge of the market are three circular colonnaded markets.

Built as part of the new city, Gole Market had all the trappings that were a part of colonial cityscapes in India, elegant wrought-iron lamp posts and benches included. These have disappeared over time, and a proliferation of makeshift stalls and shops have



resulted in Gole Market looking a rather decrepit shadow of its original self. The New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC), however, has plans to restore the market and reinstate it as a heritage site.

Meanwhile, though, Gole Market does function as a popular shopping centre, offering a wide variety of wares. The shops here sell everything from books to antiques, saris to medicines, but Gole Market's single most popular attraction is probably its eateries. Among the best-known here are sweet shops like Kaleva and Bangla Sweet House. If you like *chaat* (the spicy-sweet-tart range of snacks that are so important a part of Delhi's street food), do try it out at Bangla Sweet House—it is considered among the best eateries in New Delhi for *chaat*.

Sunday closed.

3. SACRED HEART CATHEDRAL

Among Delhi's most prominent reminders of its days as a colonial city are its many churches—of which the bulk, such as St Stephen's in Shahjahanabad, St James' near Kashmiri Gate, and the Cathedral Church of the Redemption, behind Rashtrapati Bhavan—are all Anglican churches. The Sacred Heart Cathedral is one of the major exceptions. This vast Roman Catholic cathedral was also built by the British, at the time when New Delhi was coming into being.

Father Luke, the parish priest of the Catholic Church in Delhi during the 1920s, provided the initial impetus for the construction of the Sacred Heart Cathedral. It was thanks to his encouragement that designs were eventually invited for the church; eight architects submitted layouts. The final design, chosen by Edwin Lutyens himself (and approved by Father Luke) was the one submitted by Henry Alexander Nesbitt Medd. The foundation stone of the church was laid in 1929 by the Archbishop of Agra; construction began the following year and continued for the next five years.



The cathedral was finally consecrated in 1935. The Archbishop of Agra presented vestments, the church bell, and the fittings for the altar, while Sir Anthony de Mello donated the Carrara marble of which the altar is carved. Some of Delhi's wealthier British citizens donated other furnishings for the cathedral.

Compared to the somewhat staid buff sandstone monuments that dominate the landscape of Lutyens' Delhi, the Sacred Heart Cathedral's cream-and-red painted façade looks distinctly showy. This is an Italianate structure, with a triangular pediment supported on columns forming the central part above the entrance. On either side of the pediment rise two triple-storeyed, arcaded towers. Inside, the cathedral has a curved ceiling and stone floors. Surrounding the building are 14 acres of land, which include lawns, gardens, and subsidiary buildings.

The Sacred Heart Cathedral is at 1, Ashok Road, at the junction of Baba Kharak Singh Marg and Ashok Road. The cathedral is bounded on either side by schools: St Columba's on Bhai Vir Singh Marg and the Convent of Jesus and Mary on Bangla Sahib Road.
Timings: 6.30 am–7.00 pm

Mass is held daily at the cathedral in English and on Sundays in three languages: English, Hindi, and Malayalam, at different times.

4. GOLE DAK-KHANA

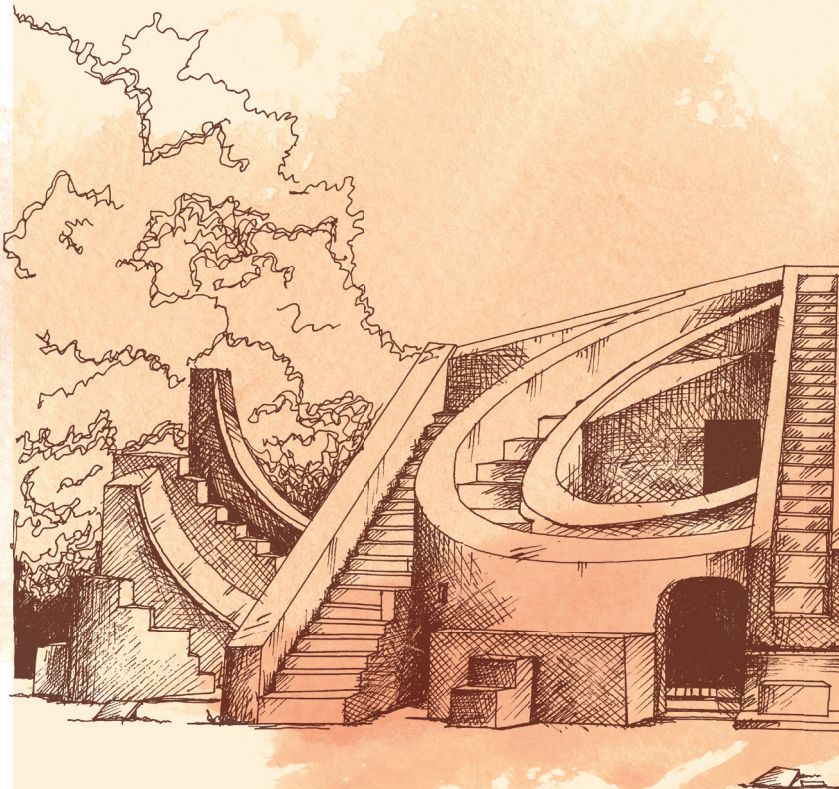
Directly opposite the Sacred Heart Cathedral, standing in the middle of a traffic circle, is the Gole Dak-khana (literally, 'round post office') General Post Office (GPO). Designed by R. T. Russell, the post office was built in the 1930s. Before the Cathedral Church of the Redemption (behind Rashtrapati Bhavan) was constructed, Anglican church services were held in this building. The congregations had to be restricted, since the building could accommodate no more than sixty people at a time.

The Gole Dak-khana was originally named Alexandra Place and was the office of the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) till the 1960s, after which it was converted into a post office—a function it still fulfils.

The exterior of the Gole Dak-khana is relatively plain, adorned with semi-circular arches and columns at the entrance. It's painted a combination of white and buff, with a good deal of red—the official colour of India Post—at the entrance. The fringe of land between the building and the road around it has a few trees.

Visitors may enter the post office during working hours. Since this is a government office, photography is prohibited.





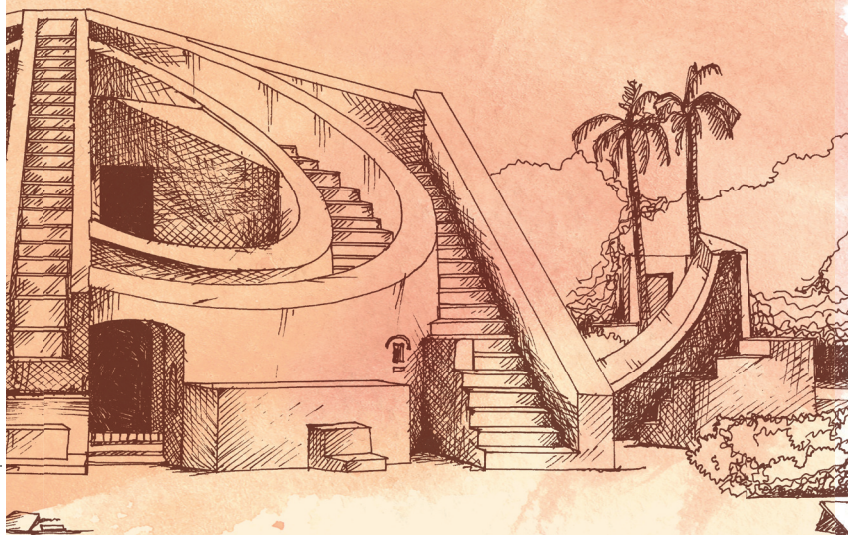
5. JANTAR MANTAR

Like the Agrasen ki Baoli, Jantar Mantar is one of the historic structures that already existed in this part of the city when New Delhi was built. Like many of the other structures, this too became part of the modern city that arose, and it is, even today, one of Delhi's most interesting historic and scientific structures.

The Jantar Mantar is an open-air observatory, a collection of astronomical instruments built by Sawai Jai Singh II in the early eighteenth century. He constructed it through a royal sanction of the Mughal ruler at the time, Muhammed Shah 'Rangeela'.

Called the 'Yantra Mantra' (Instruments and Formuale) originally, the observatory was sited on flat ground free of trees to ensure that no shadows obstructed the use of the instruments. The structures are unrelated to each other and their arrangement is such that none of the instruments interfere with the readings of another.

Jai Singh II was a student of astronomical works of India and Europe and discovered that astronomical tables and instruments in use at the time were inaccurate. The Jantar Mantar rectified the



inaccuracy through its scale and its permanence, the instruments being fixed on the ground. To reaffirm the readings in Delhi, he constructed four more observatories, one each at Mathura, Ujjain, Benaras, and Jaipur.

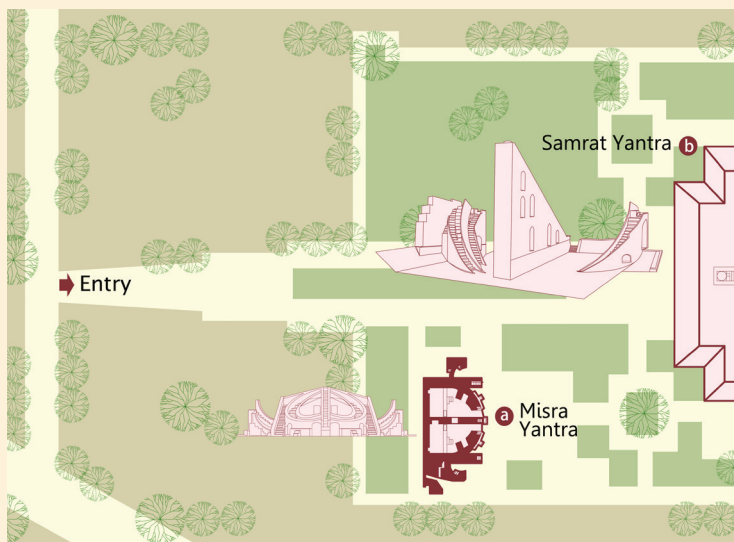
The initial construction here was of the Samrat Yantra, Jai Prakash Yantra, Ram Yantra, and the Shashthamsa Yantra. While the Samrat Yantra was reproduced in the other observatories, the last three are specific to Delhi and Jaipur.

In the eighteenth century, the Jantar Mantar fell prey to various kings and raiders who attacked Delhi for its riches. The reparation work on the instruments has been carried out a number of times since their construction – two such being by the royal family of Jaipur in 1852 and 1910. The instruments now painted in red were originally covered in limestone plaster, with white plaster being used to mark the scales.

A temple of the Bal Bhairav that today lies just outside the eastern wall used to fall within the complex, perhaps close to its original entrance.

a. Misra Yantra: Misra Yantra, the ‘mixed instrument’, does not find mention in the papers of Jai Singh II, and was probably built by his son, Madho Singh. The Misra Yantra combines five instruments. The Samrat Yantra, formed by the two corresponding quadrants on the west and east sides, is a sundial. The Niyat Chakra Yantra—which consists of the central wall and the two surrounding semi circles—was used to tell the time at Greenwich, Zurich, Serichew (in Pic Islands in the Pacific Ocean), and Notkey (Japan), at noontime in Delhi, and vice-versa. The working of the Agra Yantra (amplitude instrument), the larger quadrant on the west side of the building, has not till date been identified. The Karka Rasivalaya (‘circle of the sign of Cancer’) Yantra, that was used to tell the sign of the zodiac in the sky, besides marking the summer solstice, is a graduated semi circle on the back of the northern wall of the Misra Yantra. The Dakshinottara Bhitti (meridian wall) Yantra is a graduated semi circle on the eastern wall of the building and was used to observe the altitude of a heavenly body when it passed the meridian.

b. Samrat Yantra: The Samrat Yantra—the Supreme Instrument—is located at the centre of the observatory complex and is basically a sundial. The central triangle lies parallel to the north-south meridian and the hypotenuse of this triangle is at almost the angle as that of Delhi’s latitude. The shadow of the triangle’s wall on the quadrants marks the local time, while the scales marked on both



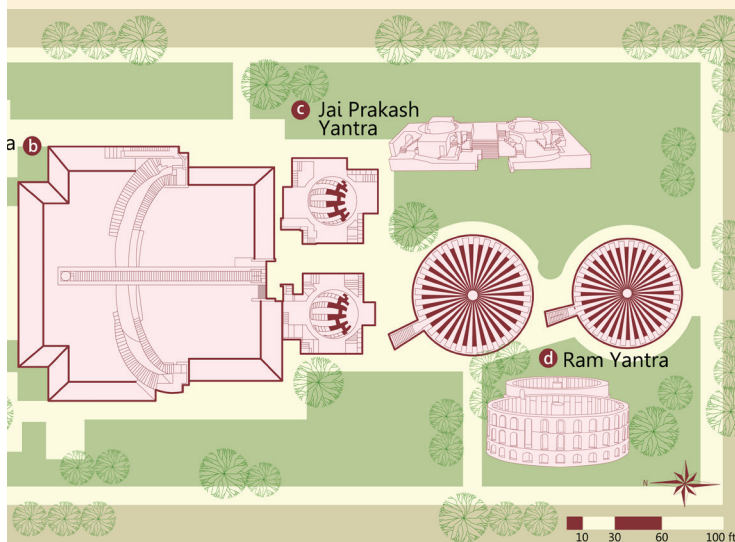
edges of the central staircase mark the position of the sun in the sky. On the east side of the Samrat Yantra is the Shashtamsa Yantra, a sextant. It lies within a chamber that has remained closed since its construction.

c. Jai Prakash Yantra: Invented by Jai Singh himself, this instrument consists of two complimentary circular buildings. The hollow bowls of the two buildings taken together represent the sky. The surface of these two bowls was marked by scales to enable readings. Wires were stretched across the bowls with a ring affixed at the centre. The shadows of the wires and ring on the inside of the bowls gave the position of the sun. Stairs and platforms were constructed to allow observers to read the scales.

d. Ram Yantra: The two circular bodies located at the southern end of the complex together make up the Ram Yantra. They are both circular walls with a circular pillar located at the centre. The spaces left in between the walls allowed one to take the readings on the walls and the floor. Thus, like in the Jai Prakash Yantra, the two buildings when taken together form a complete instrument.

Timings: Sunrise–Sunset

Entry: Indian Citizens—Rs 5, Foreign Nationals—Rs 100. A further fee of Rs 25 is levied for video photography; still photography is free. Try and time your visit for a sunny day, when the abundant sunlight can make it easier to understand how each instrument at Jantar Mantar works.





6. EASTERN AND WESTERN COURT

South of Connaught Place, on either side of the broad Janpath Road, stand the Eastern and Western Courts. These are two equally striking buildings, both cream-painted, with rows of tall columns, semi-circular arches, and deep verandahs forming a backdrop against lawns and trees. Both buildings were designed by R. T. Russell, and were built in the 1930s, around the same time as some of the other important governmental buildings of New Delhi were built. Russell's style was in keeping with the style adopted by Lutyens and Baker for the residential buildings and minor offices that were to be part of the new capital.

The Western and Eastern Courts were originally planned to be used as hostels for legislators. The Western Court still serves a similar purpose: it is designated as a transit hostel for Members of Parliament, and is therefore off-limits for the general public. The Eastern Court houses a post office (which can be visited, as long as you don't take photographs). The Eastern Court is also home to some offices of the Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd (MTNL).

7. AGRASEN KI BAOLI

Among the buildings that already existed in the area when Lutyens' New Delhi was laid out, one of the most prominent was the fifteenth century *baoli* of Agrasen (alternately known as Ugrasen). As its name suggests, the *baoli* is believed, according to



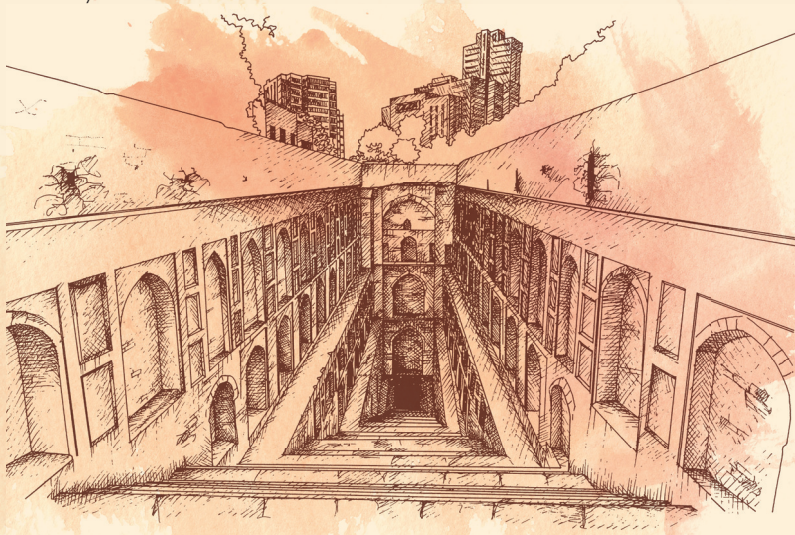
legend, to have been built by an ancient king Raja Agrasen. There is no historical evidence in support of this legend, but the *baoli* was repaired and rebuilt during the fourteenth century by the Agrawal community, which is supposedly descended from Agrasen. Wealthy Agrawal merchants donated in both cash and kind (the latter in the form of building material) for the renovation of the *baoli*, which stands near present-day Connaught Place, within easy walking distance of Jantar Mantar.

Like similar step-wells in Delhi and its vicinity, Agrasen ki Baoli too consists of separate levels of steps leading down to the water. Here, there are three levels bounded by a thick wall of rubble masonry, decorated with rows of large, shallow arched cells that could be used as shelter for travellers. At the northern end of the *baoli*, a roof covers a platform that could be used as seating. An interesting feature of Agrasen ki Baoli is the fact that besides the round well (which is a typical feature of *baolis*), it also has a square *baoli*, next to this platform.

On the western end of the *baoli* is an unusual inclusion for a structure that was supposedly built by a Hindu community: a mosque. This mosque is decorated with incised plaster medallions and has four red sandstone columns forming a three-arched façade. When and how this mosque came into existence is a question mark. Agrasen ki Baoli is protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

Timings: 9.00 am–5 pm

Entry: Free



Other Places of Interest

a. HANUMAN MANDIR

One of the best-loved deities in the Hindu pantheon, the monkey-god Hanuman is the reigning deity of this medieval temple that sits on Baba Kharak Singh Marg, in the heart of Connaught Place. Hanuman is worshipped here mainly in his infant form—‘Bala Hanuman’ (literally, ‘child Hanuman’). Hanuman Mandir was built during the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar, by the ruler of Jaipur, Maharaja Man Singh I of Amber (r. AD 1540–1614). Maharaja Jai Singh (who also constructed Jantar Mantar) commissioned the restoration of the temple in AD 1724. Since then, the temple has been renovated and ‘modernized’ to such an extent that it is now not recognizable as a historic structure. It is, however, still an important place of worship for Hindus. Hanuman Mandir stands atop a high platform approached by a marble staircase, with door-leaves of beaten silver leading inside the shrine. Much of the ornamentation here—the painted ceiling of the hall, and the silver of the doors, for instance—depicts scenes from the Hindu epic, the Ramayana, in



which Hanuman's prowess and loyalty to Rama played a vital part. Idols of other Hindu deities, including Rama and Sita, Laxman, Krishna and Radha, are also installed in the temple. The New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) has recently renovated Hanuman Mandir and added more shrines to other deities, such as Shiva, Parvati, Karthik, Durga, and Ganesh.

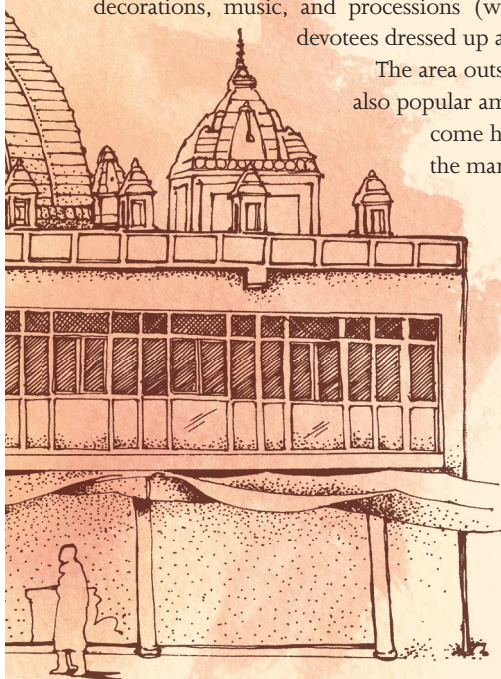
Interestingly, Hanuman Mandir even has a literary connection; the sixteenth century poet Tulsidas (who composed the *Ramcharitmanas* and the *Hanuman Chalisa*, major hymns in praise of Rama and Hanuman respectively) is supposed to have visited this temple on the request of the reigning Mughal emperor. It is said that the emperor presented Tulsidas with a crescent-shaped structure (symbolizing Islam); this was installed atop a spire of the temple and can still be seen. The belief is that the structure helped protect Hanuman Mandir from Mughal attacks in later years, when religious intolerance had set in to some extent. It's a quaint legend, though its historicity is doubtful.

Hanuman Mandir is open to visitors daily. Tuesdays and Saturdays, which are considered auspicious for Hanuman, see thousands flocking to the temple, so you can time your visit depending upon whether or not you want to be part of the crowds on these days. Hanuman Jayanti (the 'birth anniversary' of Hanuman, which generally falls in March or April) is a big occasion, with festivities, decorations, music, and processions (which invariably include devotees dressed up as Hanuman).

The area outside Hanuman Mandir is also popular among Delhi women who come here to buy bangles from the many bangle-sellers who've stalls here. Around the time of Hindu festivals such as Karva Chauth and Diwali, many expert painters of henna also sit here, offering their services to decorate hands and feet with henna.

Timings: 5.00 am
—midnight, devotees
congregate in large
numbers specially on
Tuesday and Saturday.

Entry: Free





b. STATE EMPORIUMS

One of the main roads that radiate from the Connaught Place circle is Baba Kharak Singh Marg and, for several hundred metres beyond Connaught Place, this road is lined on one side by handicrafts emporiums representing the states of India.

The state emporiums on Baba Kharak Singh Marg owe their origin to a decision taken by the Indian government back in the 1970s to promote tourism in India. The Tourism Department established, as part of this endeavour, five emporiums that would showcase the crafts of five different states: Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Kerala. The idea was to stock these emporiums with authentic handicrafts indigenous to the state represented, thus guaranteeing for tourists (and other buyers) that what they purchased were genuine souvenirs, not mass-produced fakes.

Within five years of the first emporiums being set up, several more had been added. Today, there are a total of eighteen state emporiums on Baba Kharak Singh Marg. Among the more popular are Mrignayani (from Madhya Pradesh, best known for its range of textiles, including Chanderi, Maheshwari, and Tussar silk saris); Gurjari (from Gujarat); Rajasthali (from Rajasthan, among India's most popular tourist destinations and with a variety of handicrafts, jewellery, and textiles on offer); Zoon (from Jammu and Kashmir, which sells pashmina, embroidered textiles, papier maché, carved wood, and other handicrafts), and Manjusha (from West Bengal, known for its fine saris, embroidery, and Darjeeling tea).

Besides the state emporiums, Baba Kharak Singh Marg is also home to other emporiums and handicrafts showrooms. These include the Khadi Gramudyog Bhavan, which stocks a wide range

of products of cottage industries, especially handlooms; and the Rajiv Gandhi Handicrafts Bhavan. The latter is operated by various governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the Council of Handicrafts Development Corporations (CoHands) and Hansiba, the crafts wing of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). The Bhavan includes spaces for displays – especially of tribal handicrafts – as well as stalls where handicrafts, paper products, textiles, furniture, books, etc. are sold.

Timings: 10.00 am–6.30 pm, Sunday closed

Entry: Free

C. ST COLUMBA'S SCHOOL

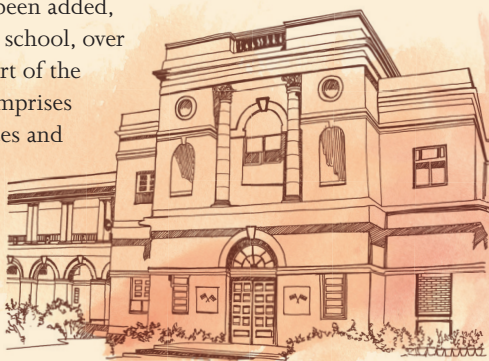
Standing adjacent to the Sacred Heart Cathedral, the boys-only St Columba's School is located off Bhai Vir Singh Marg, near Connaught Place. The school was established in 1941 by the Indian province of the Congregation of Christian Brothers (an organization founded by an eighteenth-century Irishman, Edmund Rice). The Congregation of Christian Brothers is a Roman Catholic organization that Rice launched in his native town of Waterford, Ireland, by educating and rehabilitating the poor and underprivileged of the town. By 1900, the organization had grown to the extent that an Indian province had been set up, and had put in a request for the Congregation of Christian Brothers to establish schools in India as well. This resulted in the setting up of a few schools across the country, including St Columba's. Initially, St Columba's admitted boys only up to Class VI; the total number of students in the school itself was a modest thirty-two. Today, just seventy years later, it has acquired an enviable reputation for educational excellence.

The school is in the form of a two-storeyed red brick building, with arched colonnades along the façades on both storeys. Semi-circular arches highlighted in white, along with white twin columns, form the main decorative elements of the structure. Newer buildings have been added, expanding the original school, over the years. The oldest part of the school is what now comprises the administrative offices and the seniormost (Class XI and XII) classes.

Timings: 8.00 am–

2.00 pm

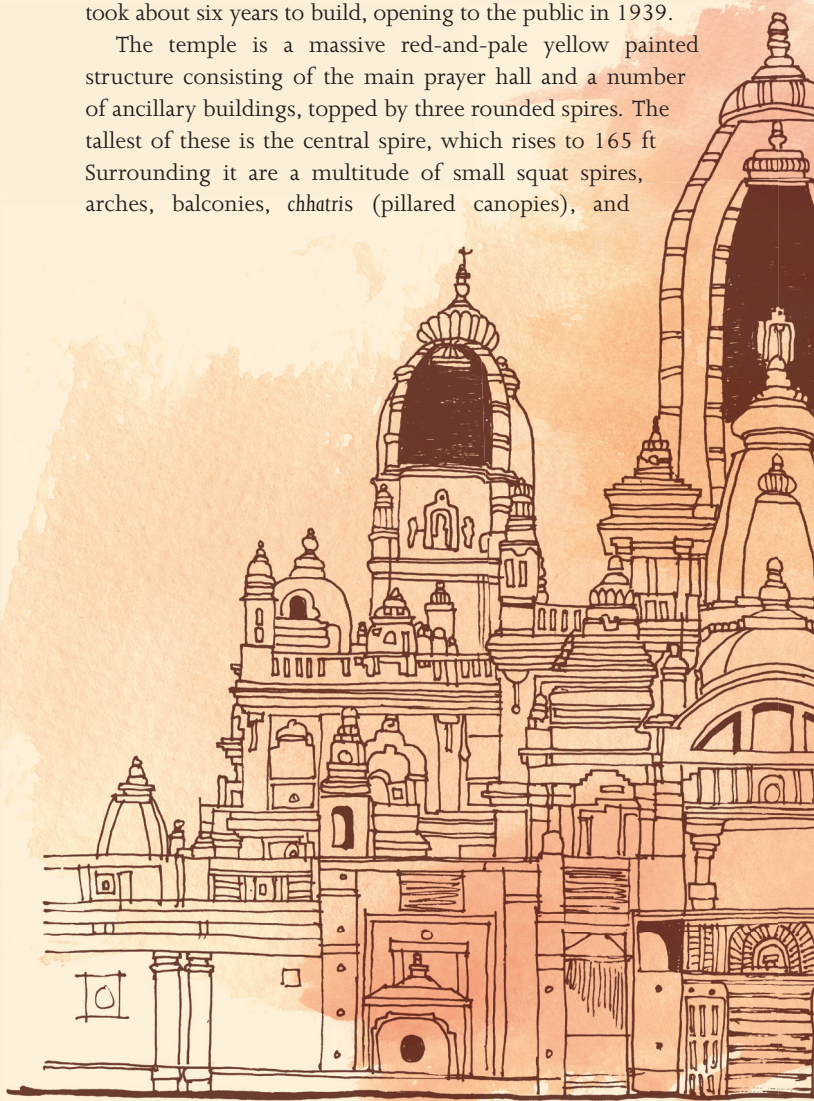
Entry with prior permission only.



d. LAXMI NARAIN TEMPLE (BIRLA MANDIR)

Although it is popularly known as the Birla Mandir, after the wealthy family of industrialists who had it built, the formal name for this temple is the Laxmi Narain Temple: the temple to the Hindu goddess of wealth, Laxmi, and her consort, Vishnu (or 'Narain'), the 'preserver' in the Hindu trinity. The temple lies just outside Connaught Place, towards the west of Mandir Marg. It was designed by Siris Chatterjee, who was a leader of the Modern Indian Architectural Movement, which promoted the revival of traditional Indian architectural styles as opposed to the hybrid colonial-Indian forms developed by Lutyens and his associates. The Birla Mandir took about six years to build, opening to the public in 1939.

The temple is a massive red-and-pale yellow painted structure consisting of the main prayer hall and a number of ancillary buildings, topped by three rounded spires. The tallest of these is the central spire, which rises to 165 ft. Surrounding it are a multitude of small squat spires, arches, balconies, chhatris (pillared canopies), and



verandahs decorated with statues of deities, elephants, cobras, and other religious symbols.

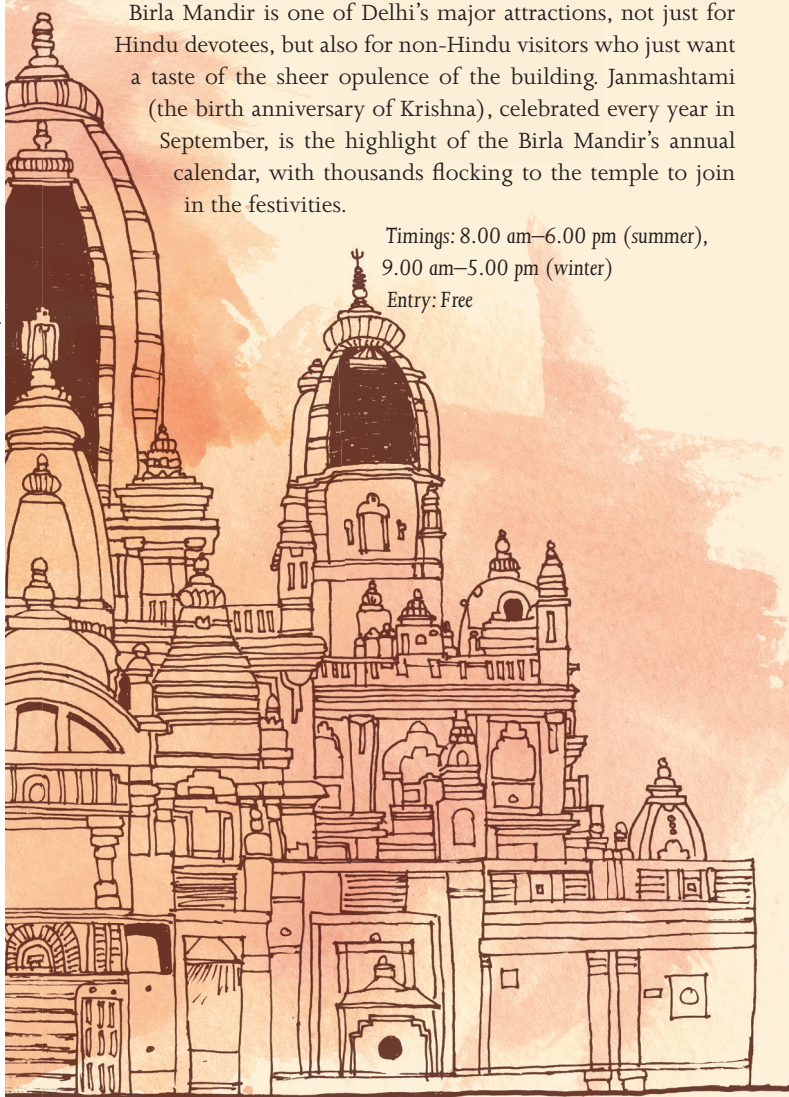
Of the main shrines in the Birla Mandir, the shrine to Laxmi and Vishnu is on the east; the eastern entrance therefore leads into the *garbha-grah* (sanctum sanctorum) where the idols of the presiding deities of the temple can be viewed. The other important buildings within the complex is the richly frescoed Geeta Bhavan, which is located on the north and is dedicated to Krishna. In addition, there are a number of other prayer halls, a small park-cum-children's play area, a clock tower, fountains and courtyards, and subsidiary buildings within the temple precincts.

Birla Mandir is one of Delhi's major attractions, not just for Hindu devotees, but also for non-Hindu visitors who just want a taste of the sheer opulence of the building. Janmashtami (the birth anniversary of Krishna), celebrated every year in September, is the highlight of the Birla Mandir's annual calendar, with thousands flocking to the temple to join in the festivities.

Timings: 8.00 am–6.00 pm (summer),

9.00 am–5.00 pm (winter)

Entry: Free



e. GURUDWARA BANGLA SAHIB

Located on Baba Kharak Singh Marg, near the busy Gole Dak-khana traffic circle, is the white, golden-domed building of the Gurudwara Bangla Sahib. Though the building itself is very new (built in the 1900s) the site is an old one, with an interesting history to it. The place where the *gurudwara* stands was once the location of the *haveli* (traditional courtyard house) of Mirza Raja Jai Singh, a nobleman of Jaipur during the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (r. AD 1658–1707).

The eighth Sikh guru, the young Guru Har Kishan (he died of smallpox in AD 1664, when he was just eight years old) had stayed in this *haveli* when he visited Delhi. As a mark of respect for the young guru, Jai Singh donated the *haveli* to the Sikh community. Subsequently, it was converted into a *gurudwara*. In AD 1783, a Sikh general, Sardar Baghel Singh, modified and renovated the building. It has seen numerous other additions and changes over the years since, so that what you now see is a completely new structure.

Within the Gurudwara Bangla Sahib is a temple or prayer room, a secondary school, a kitchen or *langar* (where food is cooked by volunteers, to be fed to all who wish to partake), and a hospital. Also part of the complex is a gallery of Sikh historical and religious art called the Baghel Singh Museum; a library; and a fresh water tank called the Sarovar. The Sarovar was originally constructed by Mirza Raja Jai Singh; its water is considered sacred and capable of miraculous healing.

Timings: 7.00 am–midnight

Entry: Free





f. JANPATH STREET (MARKET)

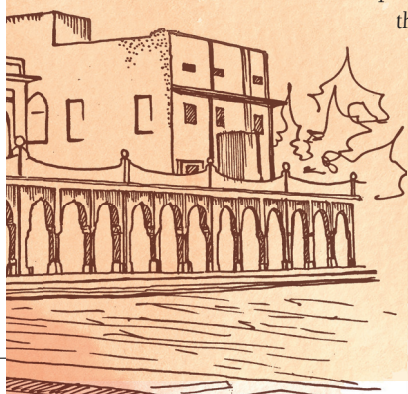
Janpath, originally known as Queen's Way, is one of the long main arterial roads of Lutyens' Delhi. It stretches all the way from Connaught Place, past Motilal Nehru Place, with some major landmarks, including the National Archives and the National Museum, along the way. For many bargain-hungry locals and tourists, however, Janpath is synonymous with the many shops and stalls that line it at its Connaught Place end. This stretch is known as Janpath Market: rows of shops, large and small, sell a wide variety of bric-a-brac, handicrafts, and other handy buys for shoppers looking for a good 'India souvenir'. Many of the shops on Janpath were originally established after the Partition, by refugees in Delhi. Later, more shops were set up by Tibetan refugees who came to Delhi fleeing the Chinese invasion of Tibet.

Recently, as part of the drive to spruce up Delhi's image in preparation for the 2010 Commonwealth Games, the Delhi Government has renovated the façades of many of the shops along Janpath Market. They now have a fairly uniform, neat look but the wares on sale are still very varied, from lushly embroidered pashmina shawls and ornate Tibetan

thangkas (scroll paintings) to cheap jewellery, scarves, and other fashion accessories.

If you enjoy shopping, Janpath Market is a good place to explore.

Timings: 11.00 am–8.00 pm,
Sunday closed












Nearest Bus Stops

- (i) **Gole Market:** 716, 752, 760, 820, 840, 854, 871, 859, 957, 963, 957, 990, 910, 940, 991
- (ii) & (iii) **Bangla Sahib:** 550, 820, 840, 910, 920, 940, 965
- (iv) **Palika Kendra:** 056, 091, 181, 185, 187, 188, 210, 459, 460, 500, 510, 535, 590, 602, 641, 780, 781
- (v) **Indian Oil Bhavan:** 051, 505, 521, 522, 526, 615, 043
- (vi) **Western Court:** 083, 051, 303, 521, 522, 526, 615
- (vii) **Max Mueller Marg:** 040, 056, 281, 349, 440, 450, 851, 893, 894, 966, 034, 043, 045, 051



-  Bus Stand
-  Petrol Pump
-  Parking
-  Toilets
-  Cafeteria
-  Metro Station
-  HoHo Bus Route



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