

Mughal Gardens renamed as Amrit Udyan

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In news– The iconic Mughal Gardens at the Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's House) in Delhi have been renamed as 'Amrit Udyan'.

A brief history Mughal Gardens in India-

- The Mughals were known to appreciate gardens. In Babur Nama, Babur says that his favourite kind of garden is the **Persian charbagh style** (literally, four gardens).
- The **charbagh structure was intended to create a representation of an earthly utopia – jannat** – in which humans co-exist in perfect harmony with all elements of nature.
- Defined by **its rectilinear layouts, divided in four equal sections**, these gardens can be found across lands previously ruled by the Mughals.
- From the gardens surrounding **Humayun's Tomb in Delhi to the Nishat Bagh in Srinagar, all are built in this style** – giving them the moniker of Mughal Gardens.
- **A defining feature of these gardens is the use of waterways**, often to demarcate the various quadrants of the garden.
- These were not only crucial to maintain the flora of the garden, they also were an important part of its aesthetic. **Fountains were often built**, symbolising the "cycle of life."

The gardens at the new Viceroy's house-

- In 1911, the British decided to shift the Indian capital from Calcutta to Delhi. This would be a mammoth exercise, involving the construction of a whole new city – New Delhi – that would be built as the British Crown's

seat of power in its most valuable colony.

- About **4,000 acres of land was acquired to construct the Viceroy's House with Sir Edwin Lutyens being given the task of designing the building on Raisina Hill.**
- Lutyens' designs combined elements of **classical European architecture with Indian styles**, producing a unique aesthetic that defines Lutyens' Delhi till date.
- **Crucial in the design of the Viceroy's House was a large garden in its rear.** While initial plans involved creating a garden with traditional British sensibilities in mind, Lady Hardinge, the wife of the then Viceroy, urged planners to create a Mughal-style garden.
- It is said that she was inspired by the **book Gardens of the Great Mughals (1913) by Constance Villiers-Stuart** as well as her visits to the Mughal gardens in Lahore and Srinagar.

The famous roses of the garden-

- Though **the layout of the garden was in place by 1917, the planting was taken up only in 1928-29.**
- Director of horticulture William Mustoe, who planted the garden, was especially skilled at growing roses and is said to have introduced more than 250 different varieties of hybrid roses gathered from every corner of the world.
- **There are three gardens in the Rashtrapati Bhavan inspired by Mughal and Persian gardens.**
- The **one inspired from the garden in Srinagar is known as Mughal Garden.** But the gardens were never officially named Mughal Gardens, they came to be known so owing to the style of architecture.
- The style was influenced by the Persian gardens, particularly the charbagh structure, which is intended to create a representation of harmony with the elements of nature.

- Typical features include pools, fountains and canals inside the gardens.
- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan have a number of Mughal gardens. **In fact, Babur had described his favourite type of garden as a charbagh.**
- The Rashtrapati Bhavan houses a variety of gardens. Originally, they included East Lawn, Central Lawn, Long Garden and Circular Garden.
- **Lady Beatrix Stanley, a prominent horticulturist, noted in 1931** that she had not seen better roses in England.
- Later, more variety was added, especially during the presidency of Dr Zakir Husain.
- The gardeners of the Rashtrapati Bhavan have kept alive the **tradition of nurturing the defining feature of the gardens – the multitude of rose varieties.**
- They include **Adora, Mrinalini, Taj Mahal, Eiffel Tower, Sentimental, Oklahoma (also called Black Rose), Black Lady, Blue Moon and Lady X.**
- **There are also roses named after personalities: Mother Teresa, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Abraham Lincoln, Jawahar Lal Nehru,** and Queen Elizabeth, Arjun and Bhim.
- The ingenious gardeners also introduced new, exotic varieties of flowers like birds of paradise, tulips and heliconia in 1998.
- The gardens have evolved over time. While roses remain the star attraction, **residents of the Rashtrapati Bhavan have all added their own personal touch to the garden.**
- For instance, **C Rajagopalachari, the last Governor General of India, made a political statement when during a period of food shortage in the country, he himself ploughed the lands and dedicated a section of the garden to foodgrains.**
- **Today, the Nutrition Garden, popularly known as Dalikhana, stands in that spot,** organically cultivating a variety of vegetables for consumption at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- **President R Venkatraman added a cactus garden (he just**

liked cacti) and APJ Abdul Kalam added many theme-based gardens: from the musical garden to the spiritual garden.

Note:

- The Rashtrapati Bhavan's Mughal Gardens and it will be called Amrit Udyan from now on.
- The move comes as India celebrates 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' marking 75 years of India's Independence and its struggle for development from the shackles of colonialism.
- "The collective identity of all the gardens at Rashtrapati Bhavan will be 'Amrit Udyan'.

About Rashtrapati Bhavan-

- Rashtrapati Bhavan, home to the President of the world's largest democracy, epitomizes India's strength, its democratic traditions and secular character.
- Rashtrapati Bhavan was the creation of architects of exceptional imagination and masterfulness, Sir Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker.
- It was Sir Lutyens who conceptualized the H shaped building, covering an area of 5 acres on a 330 acre estate.
- This mansion has a total of 340 rooms spread over four floors, 2.5 kilometres of corridors and 190 acres of garden area.
- Painstaking efforts of thousands of labourers including masons, carpenters, artists, carvers, and cutters saw the completion of this masterwork in the year 1929.
- Originally built as the residence for the Viceroy of India, Viceroy's House as it was then called, has metamorphosed into today's Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- When constructed, it was called the Viceroy's House. The name changed to Government House on August 15, 1947 when India became independent. Finally, its name was changed

to Rashtrapati Bhavan during the term of President Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

- It served as a home to Viceroy Lord Irwin and subsequently to other Viceroys of India till Lord Mountbatten, the last British Viceroy and the first Governor-General of independent India in 1947.
- **Lord Mountbatten administered the oath of Prime Minister to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru under the Central Dome of Rashtrapati Bhavan in 1947.**
- **C. Rajagopalachari, the first Indian Governor-General also took oath under the Central Dome on June 21, 1948 and became the first Indian to reside** at the Government House, as it was then called.
- Finding the Viceroy's room too royal to stay, he shifted to smaller rooms (now called the **Family Wing of the Rashtrapati Bhavan**) for his personal use.
- This has been followed by all subsequent residents of the Bhavan. The erstwhile Viceroy's Rooms have been converted into the Guest Wing for stay of Heads of State and Government and their delegations.
- As the first president of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad took Rashtrapati Bhavan as his abode in the year 1950 after assuming office.
- Little known is the fact that **Mahatma Gandhi, much before the political heads of independent India, was an early visitor to the newly constructed Viceroy's House.**
- **The Viceroy had invited him for a meeting which was met with dissent by Winston Churchill.** Nevertheless, Mahatma Gandhi carried with him salt to add to his tea as a mark of protest **against the British Salt tax.**
- The series of meetings between Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Irwin finally culminated in the famous Gandhi Irwin pact that was signed on March 5, 1931.
- Rashtrapati Bhavan has since independence hosted defence investiture ceremonies, swearing in of its leaders, honoured its bravehearts and achievers, has heard the speeches of world leaders, signed pacts and treaties

with various countries, celebrated India's Independence and Republic Day functions along with other festivals.