



THE IMPERIAL

New Delhi

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HISTORY OF THE IMPERIAL

In the year 1880 Rai Bahadur Sardar Narain Singh, the great grandfather of Mr. Jasdev Singh Akoi, the Managing Partner of M/S Akoi Saab, the ownership firm of The Imperial, was given the contract to build a part of the Patiala tunnel by no less than the Maharaja of Patiala himself.

This was followed by an invitation to build Dehradun, the beautiful valley in the north-west part of India, also known for its proximity to such tourist attractions as Mussoorie – the Queen of hills and the spiritual hubs of Hardwar and Rishikesh. As part of the master plan, Rai Bahadur Sardar Narain Singh was asked to build the Prince of Wales College, Doon School, Forest Research Institute of India and all the bridges in the valley.

One prestigious assignment led to another including the contracts for building the Sarhand Canal and the road to Koeta.

Around this time the British were contemplating to shift the Capital of India to Dehradun or Delhi. Viceroy Henry Lawrence had already made Simla the summer capital of India.

On December 12, 1911 King Emperor George, the V had declared New Delhi as the new Capital of India. Three days from this date, on December 15, King Emperor George, the V and Queen Empress Mary laid the foundation of New Delhi. The announcement was made at the grand Coronation Durbar. It is chronicled in a Certificate from the Hon'ble Sir John Prescott Hewett, the President, Central Durbar Committee to Major S.D.A. Crookshank, M.V.O., Superintendent, Durbar Works, King Emperor's Camp that "His Imperial Majesty was pleased to express on behalf of the Queen Empress and himself the opinion that they had never witnessed and never would witness again so impressive a ceremony as the Durbar." Following this gratifying expression of Their Imperial Majesties' gracious satisfaction, Major Crookshank granted a certificate to R.B.S. Narain Singh for "undertaking all the bigger works... for the work done on roads and building in connection with the Durbar 1911... and for his arrangements that were first to last excellent in every way." Sardar Narain Singh was honored with the title of Rai Sahib and awarded the Durbar medal in recognition of his splendid work. Today, The Imperial boasts of a beautiful restaurant aptly named 1911, that stands as a tribute to this historic milestone.



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The Imperial was built and run by S.B.S. Ranjit Singh, son of R.B.S. Narain Singh. Conceptualised in 1934 by Blomfield and inaugurated by Lord Willingdon in 1936, The Imperial is a fine confluence of a rich historical past and a slick international appeal. The 24 king palms that lead up to the porch are an integral part of and witness to the very creation of New Delhi.

The Hotel was designed to be the finest monument in Lutyens' grand vision of the Capital City's original master plan. Blomfield designed the Hotel with a unique blend of Victorian, old colonial and a playful dosage of informal art deco

Lady Willingdon would be seen at the Hotel looking after the interior designing. Two Italian marble shops were bought out. Persian rugs and art deco objets d'art were brought in to compliment the look.

It was Lady Willingdon who gave the name 'The Imperial' to the Hotel. She, even, conferred the lion insignia upon the Hotel.

The Imperial was the first amongst the legendary "Four Maidens of the East", which some say included The Strand hotel in Rangoon, Raffles Hotel in Singapore and the Great Eastern & Oriental in Calcutta.

The Imperial was placed on the second most important social boulevard of the nation, the prestigious Queensway, now called Janpath, the first being the grand and ceremonious Kingsway, now known as Rajpath.

From the time The Imperial opened its doors in the 1930s, when India was beginning to write the last chapters of its saga on independence, there was little space in New Delhi for an Indo-British rubbing of shoulders. The Imperial provided such a space. Pandit Nehru, Mahatama Gandhi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Lord Mountbatten would meet at The Imperial under congenial conditions to discuss the partition of India and creation of Pakistan.

The Imperial's pillared verandahs, dining rooms, tea lounges, Royal Ballroom and cool and spacious gardens became the venue of many celebrated encounters between the British and Indian aristocracy and gentry. If only walls could speak, here indeed was a repository of fascinating anecdotal material for authors of romantic and detective fiction.



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It was here at The Imperial, where you could click your glasses on the same table as the as The Viceroys and India Royalty, to the war efforts or to the quit India movement; to the war effort or to the Quit India Movement. Replete with tableware from London, Italian marble floors, Burma teak and rosewood furniture, fountains from Florence, original Daniell's and Frazer's on walls and the best of Indian furniture. The Imperial - a unique low- rise structure creates the aura of the early 19th century English manor.

Extensive restorations over the last five years once again assure The Imperial's place amongst the best. Internationally renowned interior designers have worked on the brief to restore the Hotel to its original character and glory, subtly incorporating technology and modern day facilities in the rooms. The Imperial still retains its relationship with the era of gracious living and personalized service that is far removed from the slick silicon style of modern hotels.

Till the 1970s every important person stayed at The Imperial. Nehru family had a permanent suite here. 13 Embassies were located in the premises of the Hotel.

The tradition continues. No wonder then, that celebrities like James Cameron, Frederick Forsyth, Kate Winslet and more recently the Queen of Netherlands, King of Morocco and Rock Star Sting never stay elsewhere, when in Delhi.
