

**LODHI GARDEN**

Lodhi Garden promises a visitor not just lungs full of oxygenated air but also a treat to the senses during early hours of the day at winters - with its monuments, trees, birds... and one can add people, to talk and socialise



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# Revisiting the sultan's premises

IT'S ONE PLACE WHERE MOST OF US HAVE VISITED SOMETIME OR THE OTHER. THIS WEEKEND TAKE A TRIP OF THE LODHI GARDEN TO SAVOR ITS HERITAGE

► KANIKA SINGH



**W**alking through Lodhi Garden is a new experience every time. The garden changes colours with seasons – the summers are filled with yellow flowers of laburnum, rains bring a new life to the trees and the winter mist lends it a quite, mysterious air.

The beauty of the garden is enhanced by the imposing monuments in the garden. The name 'Lodhi Garden' is due to the fact that the most prominent of these monuments were built during the times of the Lodhi Sultans. The garden is, in fact, a creation of the British, when they were building their new capital of Delhi. It was originally called Lady Willingdon Park. Its current name was given post independence when it was re-landscaped under Joseph Allen Stein.

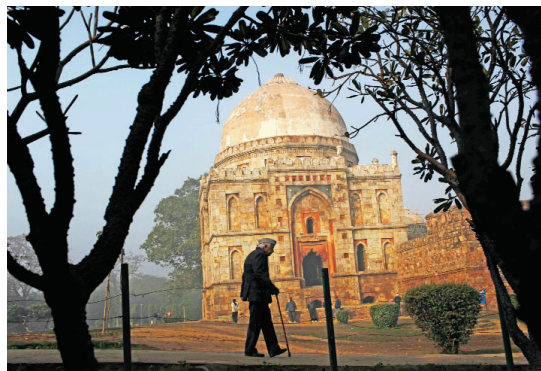
A heritage walk through the garden is a rewarding experience for all. Lodhi Garden offers something to all its visitors. Let us take a tour of the monuments around the garden. In the 20th century, before the British built a new capital in Delhi, this area was a village called Khairpur. People were living in an around these very monuments. If one enters from gate no. 1 of the garden, one can see a tall imposing building straight ahead. This is the Bada Gumbad, literally 'large dome'. It is a large gateway to a complex which consists of a beautiful mosque, a central grave platform and hall used for assembly or prayers. When the British were surveying the area, they noted that the mosque was being used as a 'cow-house and surrounded by squalid huts as to be almost irreconisable'. It's a 15th century complex.

From the Bada Gumbad, walk towards the butterfly conservatory on the west. You will notice a small mosque surrounded by bamboo groves. The path along it will lead to an octagonal tomb, across the cycle track. This is a royal tomb that of Sultan Muhammad Shah Sayyid, dated to mid 15th century. The tomb stands on an elevation surrounded by palm trees all around, all together giving an extremely pleasing effect. Muhammad Shah's predecessor was Mubarak Shah Sayyid and after whom the neighbourhood of 'Kotla Mubarakpur' near South Extension is known. Take the path back to the centre of the park, towards Shish Gumbad which stands opposite Bara Gumbad. 'Shish' is mirror and 'gumbad' is dome. This tomb probably got its name from band of blue tiles on the façade that would shine like a mirror.

Further north, beyond the artificial lake is Sikander Lodhi's tomb. It is one of the early garden tombs in north India and the enclosure walls here are almost like a fortification for this warrior-king. The interior of the tomb is decorated with tiles in blue, green and yellow. The garden as is maintained today does not give us an idea of how it might have been originally. At the end of the lake is Athpula, also known as Khairpur ka pul. Further ahead are two late Mughal structures which have recently undergone conservation work. One is a double-storey structure which was once an entrance to a garden. The entrance arch has traces of floral designs painted on the plaster. Adjacent to it is a mosque. If you are here around dusk, these monuments are illuminated and looks beautiful.

The last stop on the walk was a stand-alone turret which would have been part of some kind of enclosure wall. This structure has been dated to 14th century which makes it the earliest surviving structure in Lodhi Garden.

(Writer is member of Delhi Heritage Walks, a group that leads heritage walks to lesser known areas of Delhi)



Walker's paradise: Lodhi Garden has something for all

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