"... amongst the most charming spots, however, is the bold promontory, known as Malabar Point, and crowned with a mansion, originally the residence of Sir John Malcolm, now set apart for the accommodation of the Governor, when the heat becomes oppressive at Porlul. This agreeable resort pitched upon the tall and rocky headland, like an eyrie above the waves commands a varied and extensive view, lovely at all times, but more particularly so when the sun's broad golden disc is half obscured below the azure waters, and the feathery tips of the coconut woods retain their amber-tinted hues..."

– Description of Raj Bhavan by a 19th Century traveler, Mrs. Postans.

"Maharashtra Raj Bhavan is one of the most beautiful Raj Bhavans in India. You can see the sunrise; you can see the sunset. It is spectacular. And then it’s covered from three sides by the sea."

I am happy to learn that the Raj Bhavan, Maharashtra is bringing out a coffee-table book on the Raj Bhavans in Maharashtra.

With the majestic Arabian Sea providing a grand backdrop, the Mumbai Raj Bhavan is undoubtedly one of the best Raj Bhavans in India.

I understand this coffee-table book will attempt to capture, through a series of photographs, the aesthetic beauty of the Raj Bhavans, their architecture, the flora and fauna, the arts, artefacts and other interesting aspects.

Raj Bhavans are more than beautiful heritage buildings located in grand surroundings. They represent an august institution of the State that has an obligation to protect the dignity of the Constitution and to uphold the rule of law. Quite naturally, people of the State have great expectations from the Raj Bhavan. It should be the endeavour of the Raj Bhavan to meet these legitimate aspirations.

I congratulate the Governor of Maharashtra on his welcome initiative in bringing out this coffee-table book, which will provide a glimpse of the Raj Bhavans of Maharashtra to all interested persons.

New Delhi
March 15, 2013

Pranab Mukherjee
After serving as the Governor of Nagaland and Jharkhand during 2007-2009, I was appointed Governor of Maharashtra on 22nd January, 2010 and again on 7th May, 2012 for a fresh term.

While in Nagaland, I had also served as the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam for brief periods. As it turned out, I was also given the additional charge of Goa, Uttrakhand, and Chhattisgarh during 2011-12. I, thus, had the rare privilege of serving as the Governor of six Indian States during as many years. This, in turn, entitled me to another privilege, that of living in six Raj Bhavans in the country.

Every Raj Bhavan is unique in its own right. However, I must confess, my wife Radha and I were at once captivated by the beauty of the Mumbai Raj Bhavan, which is encircled on three sides by the Arabian Sea. Not surprisingly, this Raj Bhavan is described as the ‘Queen among the Raj Bhavans in the country’.

The Governor is traditionally the Chancellor of public universities in the State. The role of the Governor as Chancellor gives him a special responsibility to contribute to the growth and excellence of higher education. The Constitution has also vested in the Governor of Maharashtra a special responsibility under article 371 (2) for equitable allocation of development funds among the three regions of the State, namely Vidarbha, Marathwada and the rest of Maharashtra. The role of the Governor may have changed from being the executive head before Independence to that of a Constitutional head of State, the Governor being merely the trustee. I therefore take the script.

The Raj Bhavans of Maharashtra belong to the people of the State, the Governor being merely the trustee. I therefore take great pleasure in dedicating this coffee-table book to the people of Maharashtra.

I am also grateful to Dr. Mitra Muhiyar-Parikh, Head of the Department of English, SNDT Women’s University and Prof. Vavatra Kamal, Vice Chancellor, for their help in editing the script.

I wish to place on record my appreciation and thanks to Shri Vasant Salunkhe, Secretary to the Governor, for his efficient supervision of the entire work. Shri Parimal Singh, my Deputy Secretary took the work left behind by Shri Muthukrishnan to its logical conclusion.

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Appreciation is also due to Shri Vasant Salunkhe, the Comptroller of the Governor’s household who has the responsibility of maintaining the beauty of the Raj Bhavans.

Spenta Multimedia has done the remarkable job of bringing out this excellent volume which I am sure will be a connoisseur’s delight. Photography by well-known documentary photographer Shri Sudharkar Desai has certainly enhanced the quality of the book.

I am also grateful to Dr. Mitra Muhiyar-Parikh, Head of the Department of English, SNDT Women’s University and Prof. Vavatra Kamal, Vice Chancellor, for their help in editing the script.

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INTRODUCTION

Raj Bhavan, Mumbai, located in the green idyllic surroundings on the southernmost tip of the Malabar Hill, symbolises the authority of the Constitutional Head of the State of Maharashtra. Enveloped from three sides by the majestic Arabian Sea, it is rightly regarded as the 'Queen among the Raj Bhavans in the country'.

‘Government House’ at Malabar Hill, as the place was referred to in the pre-Independence era, was the seat of power of the British Governor’s since 1885. Prior to this, it served as the ‘Summer Home’ of the British Governors. Some buildings in the complex date back to the early 1850s. Post Independence, the place was named Raj Bhavan and became the office and residence of the Constitutional Head of the State of Bombay.

Raj Bhavan had been the political nerve centre during the British Raj. After Independence, Raj Bhavan made the transition from being the seat of power of the Executive to that of a Constitutional Head of State.

It was at this very place that the then Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, unveiled the map of Maharashtra at the stroke of midnight on 30th April, 1960. Governor Sri Prakasa, the first Chief Minister of Maharashtra Yashwantrao Chavan and 500 distinguished people from a cross-section of society witnessed this event. With the new state coming into existence, the Raj Bhavan of Bombay had become the Raj Bhavan of Maharashtra.

In the 53 years since the formation of Maharashtra, Raj Bhavan has witnessed the swearing in of democratically elected governments on several occasions. It has hosted the oath-taking ceremonies of the Chief Ministers and their Cabinet colleagues, the Chief Justices of the Bombay High Court, the Sheriffs of Mumbai, the Lokayuktas, the Chief Information Commissioners and other Constitutional functionaries.

Contrary to popular perception, the Raj Bhavan, Mumbai is not the name of any one single building. It is a complex comprising of a cluster of heritage buildings, some of which were built as early as 1813.

Apart from Mumbai, there are two more Raj Bhavans in Maharashtra, one in Pune and the other in Nagpur. Pune served as the monsoon residence of the Governor. Earlier, the Governor would shift his base to Pune for close to two months. While this period is now reduced, the Governor continues to hoist the National Flag at the Council Hall in Pune on 15th August, on the occasion of Independence Day and host a reception for eminent citizens on the lawns of Pune Raj Bhavan in the evening.

Before Independence, the Nagpur Raj Bhavan belonged to the Central Provinces and Berar and was part of Madhya Pradesh till 1956. In 1956, Nagpur became part of the Bombay State, and in 1960, that of the newly formed state of Maharashtra. What once used to be the residence of the Chief Commissioner of Central Province in the British Raj now assumed a new role as the Raj Bhavan of Maharashtra.

The Nagpur Raj Bhavan serves as the residence and office of the Governor during his occasional visits to Nagpur, particularly during the winter session of the State Legislature that takes place in Nagpur. Even in Nagpur, the Governor traditionally hosts an ‘At Home’ reception for the members of the State Legislature and other eminent citizens during his stay.

Apart from the three Raj Bhavans, the Governor has a summer villa called ‘Giri Darshan’ at Mahabaleshwar. This beautiful villa overlooks the enchanting Sahyadri mountain ranges.

It needs to be mentioned that the Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur Raj Bhavans host the President of India, the Vice President of India, the Prime Minister of India and other Constitutional functionaries during their visits to Maharashtra.

One of the privileges of the Governor is to host Heads of State and Heads of Government visiting Mumbai. He also hosts a banquet or high tea in honour of these dignitaries.

This function of the Governor justifies the need to maintain the rather lavish Raj Bhavans in their pristine glory, notwithstanding the occasional voices of criticism questioning the need for display of such grandeur in a democracy.

The Raj Bhavans today are not merely the official residences of the Governor of the State but are also a source of pride for the democracy and the republic we live in. Each of the Raj Bhavans in the State has a fascinating history of its own. The history of these Raj Bhavans also offers new insights into the history of the State.

This coffee-table book is an attempt to bring forth the beauty of all the Raj Bhavans, their architectural and historical heritage, the natural ambience, arts and artefacts and other interesting aspects. It chronicles the stories of each of the Raj Bhavans of Maharashtra through captivating images that are sure to linger in memory long after one has turned over the last page.
The expansive grounds of the Raj Bhavan house a state-of-the-art helicopter with its own helipad. The Governor uses the helicopter occasionally to attend important events around the State of Maharashtra.

Framed by an imposing archway, the entrance to the Raj Bhavan, the Upper Gate, has enclosures on either side for security personnel.
Far away from the Malabar region in Northern Kerala lies a picturesque strip of prime property in South Mumbai, interestingly named “Malabar Hill”. To discover the story behind this name, we travel back to the early 18th century, a time when a large part of Bombay, including the region that is currently known as Malabar Hill, was owned by the powerful and well-known Keyi family, hailing from the North Malabar region of Kerala. However, despite having strong links with the various rulers and kings of that time, the well-established business family started facing problems in their trade and commerce soon after the interference of the British East India Company. After a valiant struggle, the Keyi family made a deal with the British: to save their trading rights in North Malabar, they would donate most of their property to the Company, including the lush area in South Bombay they named Malabar Hill, as a last lingering vestige of the family’s once-proud heritage in the city. Therein lies the present Raj Bhavan of Mumbai.
From the Manor House to the Fort House to the Parel House, the Government House changed its address thrice before finally being established at one of the most picturesque areas of Bombay (now Mumbai), Malabar Point.

Enscounced in the cliffs and overlooking the Arabian Sea, this 47-acre expanse of the Mumbai Raj Bhavan and the edifices within at once impress visitors with their majestic grandeur.

The Raj Bhavan has withstood the tides of time, and has only grown in character. Personalities who governed the State have left behind their footprints in the hallowed halls of this magnificent institution. The Raj Bhavan has both changed and held on to the past. Today, it is an institution that blends heritage with modernity effortlessly.
The Mumbai Raj Bhavan is primarily a complex comprising seven bungalows situated almost in a circle. The core bungalows are Jal Bhushan, Jal Laxan, Jal Chran, Jal Vihar, Jal Sabhagriha, Jal Kiran and Jal Pujan. The buildings have their unique characteristics and yet stand as a part of the whole premise facing the four-kilometre long promenade of Marine Drive.

In 1820, Mountstuart Elphinstone, the then Governor of Bombay, built a cottage in Malabar Hill, called Marine Villa. The present Raj Bhavan is built on and around this villa. Over the last century, extensive renovations have been carried out on and within the various structures housed in the premises. Modern Indian styles have interacted with the colonial architectural sensibilities to create a resplendent bhavan befitting the stature of the Governor of the State of Maharashtra.

The following chapter charts the varied architectural wonders that are a part of the Mumbai Raj Bhavan. From the banquet hall to the office spaces, it makes for a delightful journey through the picturesque labyrinths of the Governor’s office and residence.
Jal Bhushan

The most important of the buildings in the Raj Bhavan complex, Jal Bhushan, the official residence of the Governor since 1885, is a confluence of old and new architectural styles. It evolved around the original ‘pretty cottage’ built by Mountstuart Elphinstone some time in 1820.

Over the years, it has undergone several renovations to suit the requirements of successive occupants. The Governor’s residence, located on the first floor, offers an unimpaired view of the changing vistas of the ocean and the horizon.

Apart from the Governor’s Office, Jal Bhushan houses the visitors’ waiting room, the conference room, the reception hall, the lounge, the dining room, the Governor’s pantry as well as the offices of the ADC, the Private Secretary and the PRO.

The lush backyard of Jal Bhushan, the official residence of the Governor of Maharashtra, at Raj Bhavan, Mumbai.
The state-of-the-art conference room, amidst the offices on the ground floor of Jal Bhushan, has been recently refurbished and equipped with modern technology. A step away from the conference room, Rajput and Mughal influences leave their mark in the contemporary Indian décor of the Governor’s office.
Left: One of the grandest rooms within the Raj Bhavan is the newly refurbished lounge where the Governor meets with many of his visitors.

Right: The Governor’s dining room for all official purposes is a pleasant seating area where, over the years, many luminaries have shared anecdotes over delicious meals.
Jal Laxan

Jal Laxan, which serves as the presidential suite, was built by Sir Evan Nepean in 1813. It was then known as the Governor’s tiled bungalow and later in the century came to be known as the Flagstaff Bungalow.

This heritage bungalow provides the luxury and comfort befitting the stature of the leaders of the nation. The bungalow has undergone numerous changes through several decades of its existence. The Governor traditionally receives the visiting Heads of State and Heads of Government here before ushering them to the banquet hall.

The carved wooden columns typical of the Maratha period, the painted and gilded wooden furniture of the central hall, the carved wooden furniture of the western wing — all create the perfect mix of the history that India is proud of. The walls of Jal Laxan are adorned with portraits of Deccan Sardars painted by Theodore Jenson in 1866.
Looking out onto the well-kept green lawns is this small yet imposing space in the presidential suite, which is used as the breakfast room by its distinguished residents.

The comfortable yet austere master bedroom housed within Jal Laxan. The heavy drapes and simple furnishings create an atmosphere of security, comfort and familiarity.
The renovated and furnished lounge of Jal Laxan, where the President, the Vice-President or the Prime Minister entertain their guests during their visit. The furnishings in the lounge are inspired from the period of King George III.
Initially identified as the Signaller’s House in the last century, Jal Chintan is popularly referred to as Point Bungalow because of its location on a cliff overlooking the bay. According to history, in all probability, this is the same bungalow which was noticed near the Sri Gundi Devi Temple as early as 1710 and was designated as a small guard house for sepoys. It was strategically built to keep a watch on the bay and the sea. This was the only bungalow at Malabar Point until Evan Nepean built his own cottage nearby (the present Jal Laxan).

The ethereal sunsets and the appealing breeze led many powerful leaders of the country, such as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, to choose this house over others during their occasional stay in Mumbai.
Left: One of the lounging areas within Jal Chintan. The windows provide a beautiful view of Mumbai’s Marine Drive.

Right: The sparsely yet aesthetically decorated dining hall of Jal Chintan. It is adorned with a variety of exclusive paintings and artefacts. Hauntingly beautiful patterns of light shine through the intricately carved false door (seen behind the breakfast table).
JAL SABHAGRIHA

Jal Sabhagriha, commonly known as Darbar Hall, was built to host functions and events of a more official nature. While Jal Vihar was used for entertainment and amusement purposes, Jal Sabhagriha was built to conduct swearing-in ceremonies and to host other official events and cultural programmes. The audience hall can host about 250 guests comfortably for various functions. The hall, designed by George Wittet and constructed in 1911, has completed more than a century of its existence.

Jal Sabhagriha serves as the venue for the oath-taking ceremonies of the Chief Minister, Cabinet Ministers, and a few other Constitutional functionaries.
Initially known as Jal Naik, Jal Sabhagriha can host about 250 guests. Its most intriguing characteristic comprises two large hangings with the Tree of Life motif on each end of the hall. They were specially designed and fabricated by the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya of Mumbai.
Built to regale its visitors with the Englishman’s sense of etiquette and penchant for entertainment, Jal Vihar has a lavish banquet hall and a ballroom. Opened usually when the Governor is hosting visiting Heads of State or Heads of Government, the structure speaks volumes about the coming together of various cultures that our country has witnessed. Jal Vihar has been, since Independence, restructured according to Indian tastes and yet has retained aspects that fulfill global expectations. Designed to appeal to international tastes, Jal Vihar is the only structure within the premises of the Mumbai Raj Bhavan to have retained most of its colonial interiors. The décor is certainly more austere in nature but then Indian artwork does find its way into the archways, window panels and furniture. Today, the ballroom serves as the pre-dinner informal meeting place from where guests proceed to the banquet hall.

Jal Vihar, which houses the ballroom and the official banquet hall, is one of the oldest buildings within the premises of Mumbai Raj Bhavan. The banquet hall has witnessed many official dinners since late 19th century.
This grand staircase leads to the central room in Jal Vihar that separates the ballroom from the banquet hall. On both sides stand intricately carved Madras wooden wall panels (jali) from the 19th century. Similar to the plaque on the left of the wall panel stand two other plaques in the central hall, each listing the names of the Governors of Bombay since 1665, and later, the Governors of Maharashtra since 1960.
The banquet hall is one of the oldest rooms in Raj Bhavan. It is here that the Governor hosts lunches or dinners in honour of the visiting Heads of State, Heads of Government, and international delegates.

The ballroom in its classical Victorian setting is where delegates interact with the Governor’s invitees.
The pieces of art, artefacts and furniture that adorn the interiors of the Raj Bhavan reflect the eclectic tastes of the Governors who have resided here. From the French furniture that Governor Elphinstone brought to Marine Villa to the late 19th century Iranian painting of a princess to the 11th century sandstone sculpture of Shiva-Parvati, every piece speaks volumes about the artistic inclinations of Governors and the guests of State who gifted some of these artefacts to the Raj Bhavan.

The following chapter delves into the many eye-catching artefacts that are steeped in history and make for a visual delight.
Right: One of the two large and elaborately designed chandeliers hanging in the central hall of Jal Vihar.

Facing page: An ashtadhatu sculpture of Nataraj, the dance god, adorns a tabletop in the reception area of Jal Bhushan.
Left: A stuffed peacock, seen here in the courtyard of Jal Vihar, usually stands preserved as a memento in the central hall.

Facing page: An intricately carved thermocol separator encased in a glass frame stands between the official dining area and the kitchen at Jal Bhushan.
Facing page, left: A beautifully painted and carved porcelain vase stands right at the entrance of the Governor's residence.

Facing page, right: A brass peacock miniature in the drawing room of Jal Laxan.

Left: Brought in from France during the British era, these well-preserved chairs now adorn the office of the Governor. The furniture sets also include finely carved tables.
Away from the daily hustle and bustle, tucked in a corner of the house right outside the dining room, in the old wide English stairway — with its characteristic closet under the desk — that leads to the Governor’s private quarters.
Malabar Hill used to be a densely forested area except for a few government residences. Due to urbanisation, the region has lost much of its green cover to concrete towers, but the Raj Bhavan has meticulously maintained its greenery and ecosystem. Even today, the long stretch of forest in the Malabar Hill complex hosts a variety of common as well as rare species of flora and fauna. Quite often, the carcade of the Governor is slowed down by dancing peacocks while riding along the Lower Drive.

According to a study conducted by the Bombay Natural History Society in 1997, the existence of 36 species of birds along with a number of rare marine shells, amphibians, butterflies and insects have been noted in the Raj Bhavan. Some rare tree species, conserved with great care, are found in these forests. The following chapter gives us a glimpse into the wonder that is nature.
The grounds of the Raj Bhavan are teeming with several wonderful species of wildlife. A solitary squirrel, pictured here, pauses for a moment before scurrying up a tree trunk.

A mongoose emerges from underneath the cover of dense foliage to bask in the warm sunlight, taking a break from chasing snakes.

A solitary squirrel pauses for a moment before scurrying up a tree trunk.

A mongoose emerges from underneath the cover of dense foliage to bask in the warm sunlight, taking a break from chasing snakes.
Left: A variety of orchids bloom within the cool, sheltered comfort of the newly created polyhouse at Raj Bhavan.

Right: The tiled pathway in the backyard of the Governor’s residence, Jal Bhushan, provides a stunning view of the green upper and lower lawns, a flower bed, and a lotus pond.
RAJ BHAVANS OF MAHARASHTRA
Witness to Glory
Serving as the residence of the Chief Commissioners and Governors of Central Provinces and old Madhya Pradesh, the Nagpur Raj Bhavan has seen several change of guards through its 110 years of existence, before finally being given the status as the Raj Bhavan in the second capital of Maharashtra. Nestling in the midst of the Seminary Hills on the western slopes of the famed Sitabuldi Fort, this ancient building, referred to as Governor Ki Kothi by locals, has been a silent witness to some of the important events in the course of India’s struggle for independence.

After a construction period of around three years, the then Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, A.P. Macdonnel, moved into this bungalow that was subsequently chosen as the new Government House for its imperial presence. The house then went through a string of successors before eventually transforming into the residence of the Governor of Maharashtra in 1960.

The sessions held and decisions made behind the doors of this Raj Bhavan have played a pivotal role in shaping the destiny of the State. The following chapter takes you through the hallways that echo with reminiscences of a time gone by and the promise of a brighter future.
Encircled by a vast forest, the residence of the Governor of Maharashtra in Nagpur exudes old-world elegance and charm. With a history peppered with British and local culture, it is no surprise that the Raj Bhavan at Nagpur displays a seamless integration of indigenous and colonial influences in its architecture.

The ornately carved porches leading to the ballroom, drawing room and dining hall are an aesthetic delight. Wall-to-wall Persian carpets laid out in the Darbar Hall speak of opulent times that the premises have witnessed. Any visitor to this Raj Bhavan is at once impressed by its huge, circular and well-manicured lawn that serves as a majestic foreground to the heritage buildings of the premises.
Left: The grand ballroom housed in the main building of the Raj Bhavan is used to host State functions. With Nagpur first receiving electrical supply only in 1912, hand fans were the norm in the ballroom. Yet, even with the addition of electric fans today, the room retains its stately elegance.

Right: Speakers made eloquent arguments during meetings at this podium in the ballroom of the Raj Bhavan.
The premises of the Raj Bhavan don a colourful facade on celebratory evenings such as this when dignitaries come to visit the Governor.
Raj Bhavan, Nagpur houses an impressive collection of rare art and artefacts within its hallowed walls. From the masterfully carved wooden furniture and the intricately produced miniature portraits of the Bhosle kings of Nagpur to the beautifully engraved Asirgarh Fort cannon from Emperor Aurangzeb’s era — the residence narrates stories of the history that it has endured.

The ornately carved bronze cannon is said to have been brought from the ancient fortress of Asirgarh in 1663. Believed to be made of ashtadhatu — the material composed of eight metals — the cannon’s exquisite craftsmanship makes it a magnificent monument to the Mughal reign in India. Embellished with intricate Persian inscriptions, the cannon dates back to Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb’s era. This is a magnified image of the sculpted lion atop the cannon displayed on the previous page.

The following chapter explores these fragments of Indian history that shine with the glory of a vast and rich heritage.