

Taj Mahal Hotel & Tower



Building type
New Hotel & Historic Renovation of Existing

Location
Mumbai, India

Site Area
N/A

Project Area
350,000 sf

Client
Indian Hotels & Intercontinental Hotel Group

Completion Year
1974

Context: The creation of the new Intercontinental hotel and the addition and renovation of the existing Taj Hotel, a landmark edifice, was undertaken by Patell Batliwala and Associates in the late nineteen sixties and early seventies. The new building stands on the site of the now demolished 'Greens Hotel which belonged to Indian Hotels group. Initially Patell Batliwala and Associates were appointed as architects to execute conceptual designs for the new tower that were to have originated from the office of Welton Becket, a California based architect. Conceptual designs were received from abroad and designs were also submitted locally by Patell Batliwala and Associates. The clients selected the design put forth by the local firm; (the evolution of ideas is visible in the perspectives and model photos). The owners were able to gain a city variance to privatize a street thereby permitting the existing hotel to become contiguous with the new structure. During this time, it was discovered that structure (jack Arches) of the existing (old Taj) were in precarious condition, this meant that either the entire structure would have to be demolished and rebuilt or the entire interior structure from within the external walls

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would need to be demolished, maintaining the historic façade. The management decided on the latter. Hence, then Indian Hotels Chairman, Prof. Choksey appointed Patell Batliwala & Associates to redesign (old) Taj from the inside. The exterior was not to be touched except to change certain portions which did not harmonized with the original designs. Eventually a road between the two buildings was acquired and the entire project became one larger work designed and executed

Design Response: Historically, Mumbai has been at the confluence of aesthetic styles that range from Islamic & Gothic, to the colonial ideas of the Raj; which melded in almost seamlessly, with Hindu vernacular elements and iconography. Distilling from such a plethora of precedents was a challenge faced by the architects. The initial conceptual perspectives created by Batliwala show just a few of the numerous massing approaches presented to the owners, eventually being realized in the building we see standing today.

The resultant twenty stories building, though modernist

Top Left and Right: Conceptual Design Perspectives
Bottom Left and Right: Model

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and rational in its structural and formal expression, are respectful of colonial and local influences. In plan, the new tower has a triple height entrance foyer that links to the existing Taj by a spacious glazed Saracenic colonnade. This element provides a degree of separation between buildings, thereby perpetuating the individual identities of both these structures. The layout of the lower levels permits a separation of served and servant spaces, which are accessible from the service street to the north. The upper floors mainly consist of suites to the east and west connected by a U-shaped corridor. With similar intent, the structure and interiors of the existing Taj is completely refurbished to include new palatial suites, lobbies and retail. This has been accomplished without demolishing the existing facade. The logic of the concrete frame structure derives from the rational of the International style, in that there is a central core and a lighter peripheral structure. This system permits most suites to have large balconies overlooking the harbour. The façade is composed of Saracenic/Gothic arches that have inset recessed screens, which act as sun-shading devices, for the rooms. In terms of cladding, the building relies on locally available materials. The façade is granite panels interspersed with stucco, both resilient to humid and wet conditions prevalent in Mumbai. Simply put, the existing Taj and the new Intercontinental hotel continue to stand as proud landmarks facing the Gateway of India, modern in their posture yet referent to tradition in their aesthetics.

Team

Daraius Batliwala-Principal Designer
Rustom Patell-Principal Designer
Shobha Rajopadhye-Associate

Left: Tower View
Right: Hotel Night View