



The Raj on the Move

Rajika Bhandari

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Established in the 1840s by the peripatetic British, dak bungalows forever changed the way officers of the Empire and their families travelled across the subcontinent and got to know the real India. With most of the British Raj perpetually on the move, whether on tour or during the summer migration to the hills, dak bungalow travel inspired a brotherhood of sorts for generations of British and Indian officers, who could recount tales of horrid dak bungalow food, a crazed khansama, and the time their only companion at the bungalow was a tiger on the loose. Today, too, PWD-run circuit houses and dak bungalows continue to occupy an important place in the lives and imagination of India's civil servants.

In *The Raj on the Move: Story of the Dak Bungalow*, Rajika Bhandari weaves together history, architecture, and travel to take us on a fascinating journey of India's British-era dak bungalows and circuit houses, following, quite literally, in the footsteps of travellers who stayed in these bungalows over the past two centuries. Her search takes her from the early-19th century memoirs and travelogues of British memsahibs, to travelling from the original colonial outpost of Madras in the south to the deep interiors of Madhya Pradesh, the heart of British India. Evoking the stories of Rudyard Kipling and Ruskin Bond, and filled with fascinating tidbits and amusing anecdotes, the book unearths local folklore about these remote and mysterious buildings, from the crotchety khansamas and their delectable chicken dishes to the resident ghosts that still walk the halls at night.

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