

Exquisite Mughal Garden Tombs Restored



Delhi, 18 April 2015 – The restoration of the 11-acre “Batashewala complex” – undertaken by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in collaboration with the Archaeological Survey of India with a grant from the U.S Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation – was marked by the presence of **Shri Ravindra Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Culture**, Government of India and **Mr Michael Pelletier, Deputy Chief of Mission**, Embassy of the United States of America.

On the occasion, Mr Singh spoke of the Ministry of Culture’s intention to *‘this year seek to include this 11 acre Mughal Garden-tomb complex within the extended Humayun’s Tomb World Heritage Site’*.

The complex includes three 16th century garden-tombs, including the tomb of Mirza Muzaffar Hussain, grand-nephew of Emperor Humayun and son-in-law of Emperor Akbar. The Complex, which is adjacent to the Humayun’s Tomb world heritage site, had suffered from decades of neglect and inappropriate development.

The conservation efforts on the complex by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture began in 2011, following a U.S\$ 750,000.00 grant from the **U.S Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation**. The multi disciplinary team worked towards reversing the damage through a painstaking, craft-based effort aimed at restoring the historic architectural character of the site. Traditional materials and building techniques were employed in order to replace 20th century alterations carried out with modern materials, such as cement. Portions of the structures and the enclosure walls – demolished in 1989 to create a camp site – were reconstructed. The Mughal *char-bagh* landscape design of the two enclosed gardens was restored. Trees favoured by the Mughals – mango, neem, citrus, amongst others – were planted.



Conservation and landscape restoration works here have aimed at establishing a model conservation process. The process has been preceded by a systematic and scientific documentation, archival research

and detailed condition mapping. Conservation works, implemented by master craftsmen, have been undertaken in accordance with the formal Conservation Plan.

India is fortunate in its building craft traditions, which have been passed down through many generations and over a number of centuries. Craftsmen here still take great pride in replicating the work of their forefathers, using tools and building techniques seen depicted in Mughal miniatures. Craftsmen clocked over 100,000 man-days of work to complete the conservation work here.

The use of traditional materials, especially lime plaster – even when prepared in a traditional manner – will appear “new” at the onset, but over time the patina comprising organic growth will return on account of the jaggery, lentils, egg whites, pulp of the *bael* fruit that has been used as additives in the lime mortar. At the same time, the traditional methods will ensure the long-term preservation of these sites.



With the completion of conservation works at this significant ensemble of sites, a proposal to UNESCO for inclusion of the Batashewala complex in the expanded Humayun’s Tomb World Heritage Sites will be submitted in 2015. The Batashewala complex will eventually be connected to the other gardens through the Humayun’s Tomb Site Museum, which began construction on 7 April 2015.

For more information about the project, please also see the Batashewala Mughal Garden Tomb Complex brief.

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