



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Humayun's Tomb Conservation Completed

Delhi, September 2013 - The restoration of the Mughal Emperor Humayun's 16th century garden tomb, the jewel of Mughal architecture that predates the Taj Mahal, has been completed. Six years of conservation works and 200,000 work days undertaken by master craftsmen have been required to restore the Tomb's Mughal finery.

Completion of the restoration builds on the pledge made by the Aga Khan in 1997, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of India's independence, to restore the Tomb's gardens. Since 2007, the Urban Renewal Initiative, implemented by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in partnership with the Archaeological Survey of India, several government agencies and co-funding partners, has included: conservation of over 30 monuments; the creation, by an extensive programme of landscaping, of a 69 hectare (170 acre) city park in the Sundar Nursery-Batashewala Complex; and significant improvements to the quality of life for the residents of Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti, a repository of seven centuries of living culture.

Restoration at Humayun's Tomb and its gateways, pavilions and enclosure by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture has been co-funded by the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and carried out in partnership with the Archaeological Survey of India.

To restore the original designs of the Mughal builders of Humayun's Tomb -- many of which had been compromised by 20th century works -- craftsmen were required to remove a million kilos of concrete from the roof and thousands of square metres of cement from the walls, ceilings and floors of all structures within the garden enclosure.

Craftsmen also had to restore stone joints in the dome with lime infill to make the dome watertight; reconstruct the collapsed arcade of the garden enclosure wall; restore the tile work to the roof canopies while reviving tile making skills in India; apply 21,000 square metres (225,000 square feet) of lime plaster, mainly to the inner surface of the double dome and to the 68 small mausoleums on the ground level; reset 5400 square metres (58000 square feet) of sandstone on the terrace following the original patterns and slopes; and lift the 3700 square metres (40,000 square feet) stone plinth, which was buried under 20th century cement, amongst other works.

In addition to the emphasis on matching the standards of Mughal-era craftsmanship, the project took a craft-based approach to conservation that offers a model for reviving these fast-disappearing skills while simultaneously creating employment.

Together with the conservation works on Humayun's Tomb, a number of adjoining monuments have been restored, including: Nila Gumbad, Isa Khan's garden tomb, Bu Halima's garden tomb, Arab Serai gateways, Sundarawala Mahal and Burj, Batashewala group of Monuments, Chausath Khambha, and Hazrat Nizamuddin Baoli.

All conservation works are preceded by a programme of thorough archival research and exhaustive documentation, including the use of state-of-art 3D laser scanning and independent peer reviews. A multi-disciplinary team comprising of conservation architects, archaeological engineers, historians, amongst others, supervised the process.



In keeping with AKTC's general aim to leverage culture in ways that stimulate socioeconomic development, conservation has been accompanied by projects aimed at improving the lives of residents in the neighbouring Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti. In addition to initiatives in health, education and vocational training, neighbourhood Parks have been landscaped, housing improvements have been undertaken in partnership with house owners and support has been provided to the municipality for a major street improvement programme. A programme of cultural revival has focused on the musical legacy of Hazrat Amir Khusrau, the 14th century Sufi poet, who lived in the area and is lies buried there.

The Urban Renewal Initiative offers a template for the restoration of other World Heritage Sites in India and abroad that might benefit from partnerships that bring together civil society, the private sector and public agencies. It also demonstrates that in order to make conservation meaningful in historic urban centres, conservation efforts must be accompanied by development programmes that benefit local communities.

For more information, please see the website: <http://www.nizamuddinrenewal.org/> and the brief: http://www.akdn.org/publications/2013_aktc_humayun.pdf

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The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, the cultural agency of the Aga Khan Development Network, undertakes a wide range of activities aimed at the preservation and promotion of the material and spiritual heritage of Muslim societies. Its programmes include the triennial Aga Khan Award for Architecture, which awards prizes for architectural excellence, and the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme, which works to revitalise historic cities in the Muslim world, both culturally and socioeconomically. Over the last decade, it has been engaged in the rehabilitation of historic areas in Cairo, Kabul, Herat, Aleppo, Delhi, Zanzibar, Mostar, Nairobi, and several sites in northern Pakistan, Tajikistan and Mali. The Trust also supports the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as



well as www.Archnet.org, a major online resource on Islamic architecture. Its activities encompass the preservation and promotion of traditional music, through the Aga Khan Music Initiative, and the creation of museums and exhibition devoted to Islamic art.

The agencies of the AKDN are private, international, non-denominational development organisations. They work to improve the welfare and prospects of people in the developing world, particularly in Asia and Africa. While each agency pursues its own mandate, all of them work together within the overarching framework of the Network so that their different pursuits interact and reinforce one another. The AKDN works in 30 countries around the world and employs approximately 80,000 people. The AKDN's annual budget for non-profit development activities is approximately US\$ 600 million. The project companies of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED) generate revenues of approximately US\$ 2.3 billion annually. All AKFED surpluses are reinvested in further development activities.