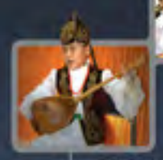
Craftsmanship at the Tomb of Abdur Rahim Khan I Khanan

Aga Khan Trust for Culture

Almaty, Kazakstan (AKMICA)


Ojaloordin, Kazakstan (AKMICA)

Dushanbe, Tajikistan (AKMICA)

Khorog, Tajikistan (HCP)

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (AKMICA)

Khojand, Uzbekistan (AKMICA)

Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan (AKMICA)

Samarkand, Uzbekistan (HCP)

Toronto, Canada (Museum+)

Doha, Qatar (AKAA)

Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina (HCP)

Cambridge, USA (Archnet)

Cambridge, USA (AKPIA)

Washington, DC, USA (AKMICA)

Cairo, Egypt (Museum)

Cairo, Egypt (HCP)

Bamako, Mali (HCP)

Djenné, Mali (HCP)

Timbuktu, Mali (HCP)

Mopti, Mali (HCP)

Mastyaf, Syria (HCP)

Aleppo, Syria (HCP)

Castle of Saleh ad-Din, Syria (HCP)

Zanzibar, Tanzania (Museums)

Nairobi, Kenya (HCP)

Gilgit-Skardu, Pakistan (HCP)

Lahore, Pakistan (HCP)

New Delhi, India (HCP)

Qutb Shahi Heritage Park, India (HCP)

Aga Khan Trust for Culture programmes:

- Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme Projects - *(HCP)*
- Aga Khan Award for Architecture - *(AKAA)*
- ArchNet, www.archnet.org - *(Archnet)*
- Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture - *(AKPIA)*
- Aga Khan Music Initiative in Central Asia - *(AKMICA)*
- Museum Projects - *(Museums)*

The notion of culture as an asset rather than a drain on resources was still a new concept in many parts of the world when the Aga Khan Trust for Culture was established. Culture was still considered a luxury in an era of unmet social and economic needs. The sad result was that both tangible and intangible cultures were succumbing to decay or decline.

In creating the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, I sought to address the problems facing Muslim societies, which are experiencing war, demographic, economic and environmental challenges, as well as the effects of global homogenising forces, and to work to protect our heritage, the anchor of our identity and a source of our inspiration.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture is the cultural agency of the Aga Khan Development Network. It seeks to identify contemporary architectural expressions of quality, engages in the physical and social revitalisation of communities and, through education and cultural initiatives in the realm of music and the arts, seeks to properly position the greatness of the cultures of the Muslim world in our global cultural heritage. The Trust aims to leverage the unique transformational power of culture to improve socio-economic conditions prevailing in many Muslim populations – communities that often have a rich cultural heritage but that live in poverty.

The Trust has shown how culture can be a catalyst for development even in the poorest and most remote areas of the globe. From Afghanistan to Zanzibar, from India to Mali, the Trust's support to historic communities demonstrates how conservation and revitalisation of the cultural heritage – in many cases the only asset at the disposal of a community – can provide a springboard for social development. We have also seen how such projects can have a positive impact well beyond conservation, promoting good governance and the growth of civil society, providing economic opportunities, greater respect for human rights and better stewardship of the environment.

The power of culture is that it can improve and unify an entire nation. And it can reveal that nation at its best to the outside world. It is therefore my sincere wish that the endeavours of the Trust have a catalytic effect on the revitalisation of communities – raising incomes, restoring pride, improving the quality of the arts and, most importantly, restoring hope.

His Highness the Aga Khan

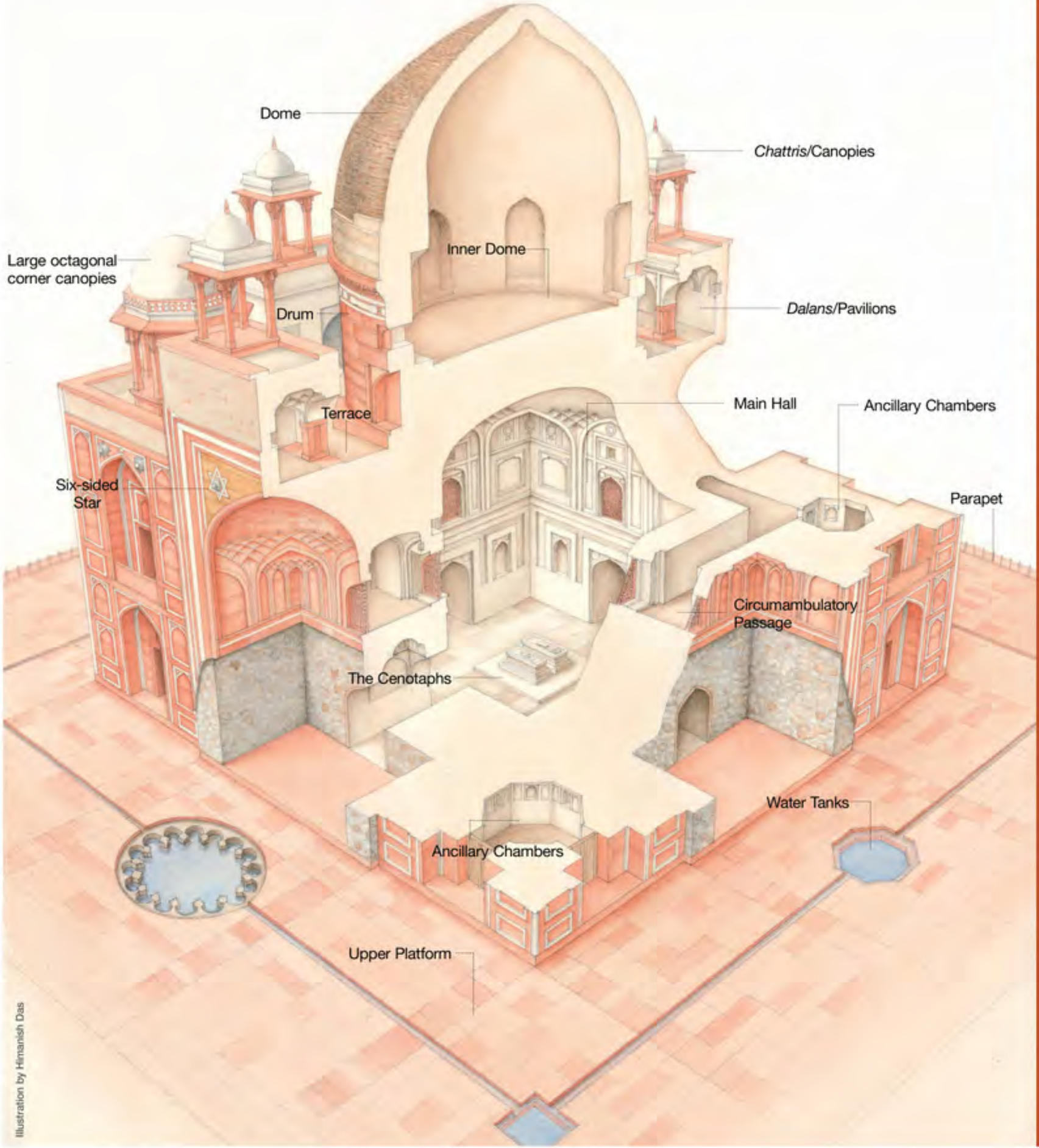


Illustration by Himanish Das

Conservation of Tomb of Abdur Rahim Khan I Khanan c. 2014-2017

"... the architects of the Taj Mahal derived their inspiration, from two buildings at Delhi which predetermined it in certain aspects of its conformation. These are the mausoleum of Humayun and the Tomb of Abdur Rahim Khan I Khanan, ...the later one is proof that the type of architecture they represent had not been forgotten during this interval...

Moreover, in view of the fact that Rahim's Tomb was erected only a few years before the Taj is also an indication that the style they typify was being revived and again coming into favour. On the traditions therefore of Humayun's Tomb on the one hand, and with the experience gained from that of the Khan I Khanan's Tomb on the other, Shah Jahan's architects evolved the masterpiece of the builder's art."

INDIAN ARCHITECTURE, ISLAMIC PERIOD, PERCY BROWN, 1968

About InterGlobe Foundation

With a vision to promote India's heritage and culture, InterGlobe Foundation sees a great opportunity in undertaking efforts in promoting India's tangible and intangible heritage and culture. We believe that heritage conservation not only seeds a sense of identity in the communities but also fulfills our responsibility of passing on our rich heritage into the hands of generations to come. With this objective in mind, InterGlobe Foundation joined hands with Aga Khan Trust for Culture for conservation of Rahim's Tomb and revival of his literary works through publications, exhibitions and films. The conservation initiative at Rahim's Tomb is an endeavor to revive the art and artistry of a person of such magnified stature and to ensure a new lease of life for the grand mausoleum that inspired the Taj Mahal. We are hopeful that our collaborative efforts would garner great interest amongst the visitors and create more awareness of our past.

For more information on the project, visit: www.nizamuddinrenewal.org
For regular updates Like us on: https://www.facebook.com/NizamuddinRenewal
Inquiry: info@nizamuddinrenewal.org

In Partnership With

Archaeological Survey of India
Aga Khan Trust for Culture
InterGlobe Foundation

1627 AD

The monumental mausoleum was built by Rahim for his wife making this the first ever Mughal tomb built for a lady. Rahim was himself buried here in AD 1627

Built as a tomb for Rahim's wife, the mausoleum is also known as a precursor to the famed Taj Mahal

1598 AD

1847 AD

Rahim's Tomb, depicted in the Asrar-us-Sanadid (1847) by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan with the garden enclosure walls, an impressive gateway and much of the stone intact. The gateway, enclosure walls have since been lost as has much of the stonework.

1923 AD

Major repair works using Delhi Quartzite stone masonry were undertaken to stablize portions of the tomb

1978 AD

Further conservation works were undertaken by the ASI including excavation of the platform and restoring some missing sandstone to the tomb.

1986 AD

The Delhi Quartzite stone plinth similar in design to Humayun's Tomb was replaced inappropriately with sandstone paving at a lower level; thus compromising the structural stability of the foundation.

2003 AD

The Delhi Quartzite plinth was re-set and garden levels raised by 18". The lower plinth paving was also replaced with red sandstone at a much lower level exposing the foundations.

2004 AD

The repairs in the ancillary chambers and main hall was carried out in cement-surkhi plaster disfiguring the original details and patterns.

2006 AD

The repairs in the lower arcade and corner alcoves was carried out in cement-surkhi plaster over the ornamental incised lime plasterwork.

2014 AD

Commencement of conservation works on the tomb of Abdur Rahim Khan I Khanan by Aga Khan Trust for Culture in partnership with Archaeological Survey of India and InterGlobe Foundation

Understanding the Tomb of Abdur Rahim Khan I Khanan

c. 1598 AD

Built as a tomb by Rahim for his wife, the mausoleum is also a precursor to the Taj Mahal for its architectural style, with some innovations developed ever since the building of Humayun's Tomb.

The marble and sandstone cladding on the dome, facade, flooring of the terrace and the tomb, the parapets, lattice screens have largely been stripped of the building over the years including significant loss of fabric in the 20th century. Conservation works commenced with the financial support of InterGlobe Foundation in late 2014 following approval of the Conservation Plan by the Director General, ASI as well as approvals of the ASI Core Committee meeting held on site.

Illustration by Himanish Das

Conservation Challenges at Rahim's Tomb

The tomb interiors have cement layers that has not only disfigured the decorative incised plasterwork but also significantly disfigured the historic architectural character. The cracks in the vaults and domed surfaces have been inappropriately filled in with cement mortar in places. On the four corners of the principal tomb chamber stand domed ancillary chambers, and as with the principal tomb chamber, they are profusely decorated using incised plasterwork. Layers of plain cement-surkhi plaster repairs have been carried out in these chambers disfiguring original elements. Decorative incised plasterwork has been restored where original patterns can be deciphered or have disintegrated.

Decayed Ancillary Chambers

The cement-concrete layer laid on the terrace will be carefully and manually removed as it has been causing water percolation to the lower levels. This will be replaced with a traditional lime concrete laid to original levels and slopes, ensuring long term preservation of the structure. The four corners of the roof have large octagonal canopies that stand on a raised platform. These have been covered with unnecessary layers of cement plaster/concrete, disfiguring their original profiles and decorative elements such as the red-white kangura pattern on the neck of the dome and broken sandstone eaves. Conservation works will restore their original character and missing elements. In the centre of the four sides stand low vaulted dalans, suffering due to water percolation from the roof above. As with Humayun's Tomb, over each of the four dalan's stood two canopies each, but now only one on the northern face can be found standing. Stone elements of the missing canopies were found at the site, and careful documentation of the stones suggests that four more canopies can be built using the pieces.

Terrace Repairs

The tomb is crowned with a double dome, where the outer dome would have originally been clad with marble serving as a protective layer for the underlying masonry. This was stripped in the 19th century exposing the underlying random rubble masonry. The inner layer of the dome is in brick masonry and had significant deep cracks. Following a detailed assessment and studies by structural engineer and ASI-AKTC committee on their cause, conservation works were undertaken which included re-plastering. An important next step is addition of marble to the dome as a protective layer and important architectural element.

Dome

The cenotaph sits in a double height domed chamber exactly over the actual burial chamber. The original plaster patterns which had been disfigured using cement-surkhi plaster, have been painstakingly cleaned and restored. The tomb chamber floor was covered with cement concrete thereby significantly disfiguring the historic architectural character, and has now been replaced with hand-dressed red sandstone flooring.

Principal Tomb Chamber

On account of the mausoleum being used as a quarry in the 18th century, marble and sandstone blocks have been stripped from here, and the structure presents a ruinous appearance. With the protective stone cladding removed from large parts of the structure, the building is today in a poor state of preservation. Major repairs to portions of the building have been carried out in the 20th century that have ensured preservation. These repairs are being retained as examples of good repairs.

Restoring Main Facade

In the centre of the southern facade the steps leads to the grave chamber. Unlike at Humayun's Tomb the domed chamber is supported on columns and has a circumambulatory passage all around it. Major structural cracks were seen in the roof of the chamber and heavy settlement of the flooring of the passage – both of which required emergency repairs to be undertaken to ensure structural stability.

Repairing Structural Failure

The ground level arcade comprises of 17 arches on each of the four facades of the mausoleum. Modern cement-surkhi plaster was applied to the arches in the ground level arcade during 2002-05 disfiguring the historic character and damaging original lime plaster.The missing plasterwork on all chambers has been restored and the concrete flooring of these chambers has been replaced with sandstone paving. The facade of the arcade comprises sandstone edging of each arch with spandrels of buff coloured sandstone with a decorative medallion on each stone. Some of these medallions have been missing or inappropriately replaced, which has been restored with new medallions prepared by mastercraftsmen.

Ornamental Plaster work of Lower Arcade

The ground level arcade had a raised chabutra or platform which no longer survived though visible in archival images. Built of Delhi quartzite, this platform had been replaced with a sandstone plinth protection at a much lower level than the original chabutra – thus exposing wall surfaces that were originally meant to be buried. As the platform is an important architectural element and a significant interface between the garden and the mausoleum the platform will be restored to its original levels.

Original fabric of Lower Plinth

Upper Plinth

The sandstone on the upper plinth was possibly stripped in the 18th century and replaced with cement concrete. Based on the evidence of stone thickness and existing patterns the plinth will be restored with red sandstone. The sandstone parapet has been restored as an important safety measure, using the same patterns as Humayun's Tomb. A large foliated water tank found on the upper plinth suggested an elaborate water lifting mechanism to operate fountains on the terrace level. Further explorations have revealed a fountain in the foliated tank and further studies on the water mechanism are ongoing.

The corner chambers of the arcade and three deep chamber are plastered with decorative incised plasterwork. Modern cement-surkhi plaster was applied to the arches in the ground level arcade during 2002-05 disfiguring the historic character and damaging original lime plaster. The four corners were restored using Delhi quartzite stone, one of the hardest stones known, as per the original details to strengthen the corners and tie-together the plinth base structurally.

Stone & Plasterwork Restoration

Rahim's Tomb
Conservation Process

Before any practical work starts, a project must be prepared on the basis of said research and must be submitted to a group of experts for joint examination and approval.

- The Florence Charter, 1981, Article 15

The conservation works at Rahim's Tomb have been guided by national and international charters but especially with the 2014 National Policy for the Conservation of Monuments and the Manual on Conservation by John Marshall – both of the Archaeological Survey of India. Writing the Conservation Manual for the ASI in 1923, John Marshall stressed that *'repairs be attempted only in cases where its advisability is undoubted, and where special funds can be provided for the purpose'*. In 2014, **InterGlobe Foundation** generously offered to fund the conservation of the mausoleum as well as an associated cultural programme. All conservation works are being undertaken at Rahim's tomb utilizing *'available traditional craftsmanship in the country and the use of traditional building materials and skills as an integral part of the conservation process'*. All repairs have focussed on imparting *'stability and to prevent loss of original material'*.The conservation effort have primarily aimed to 'prolong the life' of the mausoleum while preventing any further *'damage and deterioration'* by *'minimising the impact of external agents of decay (natural and human induced) on its setting, structure and material'*. All efforts to conserve Rahim's mausoleum will aim to *'retain its value and significance, its authenticity and integrity, its visual connections to and from the monument, and to sustain a truthful representation of its original / historic appearance'*.

1. Identify the Place

The need for extensive conservation and landscape works in Abdur Rahim Khan I Khanan's Tomb was felt necessary to ensure long term preservation, enhance visitor understanding and experience of the Tomb and cultural heritage of Rahim. Detailed structural analysis was carried out of the building at the crypt, plinth, foundation, chambers and dome. Investigative *'tell-tales'* installed at various locations on the building to assess any movements.

2. Documentation & Research

Through 2014, exhaustive recording, architectural documentation, condition assessment, structural assesments, surveys and research exercise was carried out by the multi-disciplinary project team as a precursor to the Conservation Plan that forms the foundation for the project.

3. Statement of Significance

Prior to outlining the conservation philosophy it was considered essential to define the significance as is understood by the project team. This is to be read in conjunction with the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value as per the nomination dossier.

4. Conservation Philosophy

The conservation works preceded by high standards of recording to be undertaken are focused on restoring the *'spirit and feeling'* of the space with an emphasis on craftsmanship, interpretation and supervision. A stone by stone analysis of each facade was carried out to identify the various decorative elements on each facade and to better understand the patterns of cladding in its entirety, as it would have been. The analysis informed the conservation philosophy for the restoration of the facade and stone blocks are being restored where considered necessary and where evidence of stone patterns leaves no doubt of original cladding details.

5. Peer Review

Evaluation of the importance of the elements involved and the decision as to what may be destroyed cannot rest solely on those in charge of the work. Additionally, being a related place to the WHS, it is considered essential that the conservation works are on a regular basis reviewed by independent experts in addition to ASI Core Committee and AKTC officials.

6. Conservation Plan

Implementation of works commenced only after the approval of the conservation plan by the ASI Core Committee. Following the completion of the project, Conservation Plan (text, photographs and drawings) will be available on the project website and thus accessible worldwide.

7. Implementation

Conservation works commenced only on the basis of adequate financial resources being available for the successful implementation of this project. The project has access to technical staff, national and international experts. In order to ensure quality of craftsmen, no conservation works are being tendered – all works being carried out by master-craftsmen employed by the project. Similarly traditional materials – sandstone & lime – are procured and prepared with quality assurance

8. Supervision

Conservation works are being carried out in keeping with the conservation plan and are guided by Engineers with over three decades of conservation experience and by experienced conservation architects. A conservation architect and a jr. engineer are present at all times during conservation works and are assisted by field supervisors.

9. Completion Report & Publication

Six monthly progress reports will be prepared for record and donor reporting. On the completion of the project a publication on the project will be published. In addition the annual report will document works carried out each year.

3D Laser Scanning of the tomb

Before the commencement of any conservation works, a rigorous process of archival research and documentation is followed. One of the key aspects of documentation works is exhaustive high resolution photography of all stages of conservation works, prior to commencement of works. Laser Scanning is used for accurate architectural documentation and condition mapping and detailed 3D representations of the monument. Laser beams are bounced off the building to create an accurate and complex data set which is used to create solid 3D models and accurate 2D drawings.

AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

SUPPORTED BY INTERGLOBE FOUNDATION

India still has a long established building craft traditions which can play an important role in the conservation of Monuments. Employment of crafts persons should be (for)... restoration and reproduction of geometric designs as well as restoration and reproduction of designs of historic interiors.
– ASI National Policy for Conservation, 2014

Supervision

A team of engineers experienced in conservation works and conservation architects monitor, supervise and guide the craftsmen on daily basis to ensure quality and appropriateness of the conservation works. The 1923 ASI Conservation Manual explicitly forbids any conservation work if experienced supervisors are not available.

Restoring Decorative Motifs

Careful cleaning

Layers of soot and lime-wash had obliterated the 17th century patterns in most parts of the structure but especially in the main tomb chamber. In order to ensure no damage occurs to the underlying plaster patterns, craftsmen took over a year to clean the domed ceiling with soft and moist toothbrushes – with spectacular results.

Incised Plasterwork

The central chamber and five ground level arches on each façade, are ornamented with intricate incised plaster patterns. Original patterns were carefully consolidated and preserved prior to removing 20th century cement layers and restoring missing portions in lime mortar.

Stone Craftsmanship

Master stone carvers used traditional tools and building crafts to carefully match the work of their forefathers. At Rahim's Tomb, each of the 68 arches on the ground level have a different carved motif on each side. Where one was missing, these motifs were restored as per the original design.

Cleaning the Main Hall

Using Lime Mortar

Lime mortar, prepared from limestone, returns to its natural chemical composition and thus is long lasting with only the minimum, maintenance and effort. However, preparation of lime mortar requires several weeks and stringent conditions. Additives such as fruit-pulp, lentil, jaggery ensure that patina to lime mortar returns within a few years of its application.

Repairing structural failure

Stitching the Cracks:

Unequal settlement in the crypt had led to serious structural cracks all the way to the top of the dome. Master craftsmen using traditional building techniques repaired the cracks over a year long period. This required significant underpinning of the foundations and lime grout in the masonry.

Tomb of Abdur Rahim Khan I Khanan: MAIN HALL

2014

Installing sandstone lattice screens

Manual cleaning of tomb interiors

Cleaning of the Main Tomb's ceiling

Soft cleaning of ornamental motifs and plasterwork

Retoring the missing ornamental motifs

2016

World Heritage Site of Humayun's Tomb EXTENDED c. 2016 AD

Humayun's Tomb and the other contemporary 16th-century garden tombs within the property form a unique ensemble of Mughal era garden-tombs. The monumental scale, architectural treatment and garden setting are outstanding in Islamic garden-tombs. Humayun's Tomb is the first important example in India, and above all else, the symbol of the powerful Mughal dynasty that unified most of the sub continent.

With the 2015 recognition that "Humayun's Tomb and the other contemporary 16th-century garden tombs within the property form a unique ensemble of Mughal-era garden-tombs," AKTC in 2016 proposed, through the ASI, to UNESCO, for 16th-century garden tombs standing in Sundar Nursery, such as Lakkarwala Burj, Sundar Burj, Mirza Muzaffar Hussain's Tomb, Sundarwala Mahal, 'Unknown Mughal Tomb', Chota Batashewala Tomb and Nila Gumbad's garden setting, to be included in a further extension of the World Heritage Site boundaries and Rahim Khan-i-Khanan's tomb be included within the Buffer Zone.

2016

Humayun's Tomb World Heritage Site:

1. Barber's Tomb
2. Nila Gumbad Garden-Tomb
3. Afsarwala Tomb and Mosque
4. Bu-Halima's Garden-Tomb
5. Isa Khan's Garden-Tomb
6. Arab Serai Bazaar
7. Mirza Muzaffar Hussain's Tomb
8. Chotta Batashewala
9. Mughal Tomb
10. Lakkarwala Burj
11. Sundarwala Mahal
12. Sundar Burj

AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

SUPPORTED BY INTERGLOBE FOUNDATION

PEER REVIEWS
2015-16

Every conservation effort should be supported by independent peer reviews. This need is however much greater for prominent, significant buildings and where major repairs are planned to be undertaken. It is planned to conduct at least 50 independent peer reviews during the course of the conservation effort – seeking opinion of diverse stakeholders – archaeologists, conservation architects, engineers, administrators, historians, authors, amongst others. 30 such reviews have already been held and have helped inform the conservation effort

(Main Image) Dr. Gautam Sengupta, Former Director-General of Archaeological Survey of India with the project team reviewing the conservation approach and works at Rahim's Tomb

"Rahim's tomb gets back its old glory by a careful treatment of the red and white sandstone facing of the facades and the cleaning of the amazing stucco decoration of the inner hall. We can now see again and marvel about the wonderful patterns which decorate the walls and the dome. Your work changes our perception of Mughal monuments".
- Prof Ebba Koch, Mughal Historian

"Abdur Rahim in his own person was the confluence of two different cultural traditions: His father's Iranian and Central Asian background and through his mother a Mewati inheritance. Thirdly since the early 20th century his moral aphorisms celebrating the simple virtues of everyday living have been a staple of hindi teaching in primary and middle schools in North India. I commend the ongoing project for the attention it is paying both to architectural and historical detail and am confident that with its completion a valuable addition will be made to India's efforts to preserve and highlight its built medieval heritage".
- TCA Raghavan, Diplomat & Author of 'Attendant Lords: Bairam Khan and Abdur Rahim, Courtiers and Poets in Mughal India'

"The work at Khan I Khanan's tomb is most exciting..., a monument far more damaged has turned into a thing of beauty. I have passed the crumbling skeleton of the tomb and always regarded it as something of a wreck. Yet now it stands as one of Delhi's most beautiful interiors containing some of the city's loveliest decorative flourishes".
- William Dalrymple, Author

"The "ruinous appearance" of the building is indeed appalling. Correctly, the first step is "to arrest further deterioration". It will take time "to identify stone patterns and their original position and location". With full scaffolding and arresting deterioration, understanding will grow as a base for a wide discussion: To what extent the restoration of the façade "to an earlier known state of condition" is possible".
- Niels Gutschow, Conservation Architect

"The pool system on the platform is a remarkable feature and every effort needs to be taken to bring this to life. It will be a major attraction to the finished tomb. Similarly, the remains of the existing cenotaph do not seem worthy of the place or its significance. The opportunity should be taken to provide a sympathetic but clearly contemporary indication of the original, reflecting the lives of Rahim and his wife".
- Ben Tindall, Trustee, National Trust (Scotland)

"The project has given many of us a sense of hope. Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khanan's resting place emerges from its chrysalis - as not an outsize mausoleum of a battered soldier, but as the beautiful monument that he dreamed up for his wife".
- Prof Narayani Gupta, Historian

"I would like to congratulate the conservation team for the great efforts that are being undertaken to conserve this monument and set an example for conservation in India".
- Benny Kuriakose, Conservation Architect

"The work completed so far is an example of desired coordination and interface between the traditional skill resource and modern architectural methodologies".
- Saleem Beg, Member, National Monuments Authority

"This project, with its sincere and meticulous research, preparation and planning and consistently high professional standards, is already making an invaluable contribution. This is one of the projects that prove that things can not only get better, they can inspire".
-Gillian Wright, Historian & Author

"The monument is significant on account of the association with a great personality of Rahim – a minister, commander and poet..... I appreciate the conservation philosophy which is strictly based on the ASI's National Policy of Conservation notified in 2014... and the 'archaeological approach' adopted here... in carrying stone-by stone documentation and analyses".
- Gautam Sengupta, Former Director-General (ASI)

"Indeed the Rahim Khan-e-khana tomb has been given a new lease of life".
-Komal Anand, Former Director-General (ASI)

"The main tomb chamber exterior and interior need lot of conservation work. It is essential to provide missing red sandstone from arched sides and on the walls to protect and support the hanging pieces and architectural members. It will provide the strength to the fabric and appropriate look....The conservation measures initiated have prolonged the life of the structure and I compliment ASI, AKTC and InterGlobe".
- Prof. R. C. Agrawal, Former Joint DG, ASI

"As an archaeologist I really appreciated the incredible attention to historical processes, rigorous documentation and state of the art recording and conservation techniques. The project stands out as exemplary, not only in India today, but globally".
-Prof Lynn Meskell, Department of Anthropology Stanford University

"It was Rahim's role as a poet and patron of learned men that not only contributed to the cultural ethos of the empire, but has had a lasting impact on the culture of the subcontinent. The current restoration, which is revealing and meticulously restoring the motifs used in the ornamentation of the tomb, such as peacocks and Swastikas, is immensely valuable as it tends to reinforce the impression we form of Rahim through his poetry".
- Swapna Liddle, Convenor, INTACH (Delhi)

"One hopes the "model conservation project" will bring a new lease of life to this grand monument to one of India's ablest sons; in the process if it draws attention to his poetry one can only rejoice. For, surely it is time for Rahim to step out from the shadows of long-forgotten Hindi textbooks and take his rightful place among the great poets of Hindustan".
- Rakhshanda Jalil, Historian & Author

"Traditional Craft based conservation approach is being followed by utilising the skills of the traditional craftsmen to restore the architectural and artistic values of the monument based on the scientific evidence gathered. This approach is perfect in the Indian context, where traditional crafts are still practiced and heritage is very much part and parcel of the local community".
- Rohit Jigyasu, President, ICOMOS (India)

"As this structure had major structural issues of differential settlement the solutions were arrived at with required expertise and studies. Some vaults that had wide cracks were repaired by traditional methods. The most important aspect of the project is that is helping in reviving the traditional skills and materials which are actually missing in our conservation movement".
- Vikas Dilawari, Conservation Architect

"After the restoration, the Tomb will get a large number of visitors. I am happy to know that an alternative suitable entry-exit is being designed and tree plantation is being done along the peripheries to shelter the Tomb from heavy traffic....This major work is being done with sensitivity. It will bring out all that was hidden by decades of cement plaster, as has happened in Isa Khan's Tomb. I will watch the progress with interest".
- Dr. M S Gill, Former Member Parliament

"It is remarkable that all works are being carried out by master craftsmen using traditional tools and techniques... noteworthy for the careful and considered approach."
- Jaya Jaitly, Founder Dastkari Haat Samiti

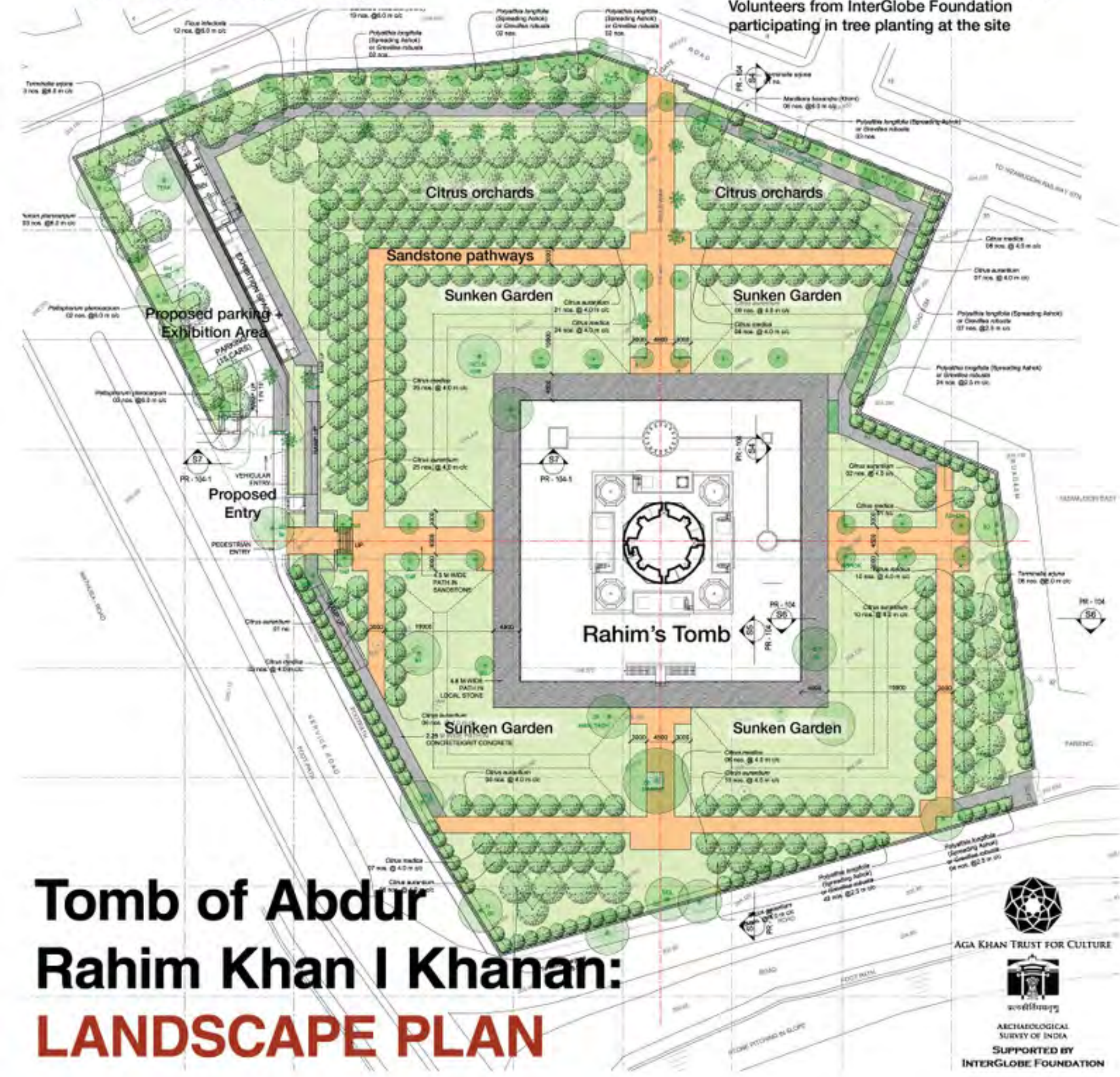
"The mausoleum had reached this sorry state because many decades ago it had been cannibalised, stripped of its sandstone and marble cladding and left exposed to the elements. The restoration cannot, therefore, be a routine affair. The roof of the crypt had settled unevenly and was threatening to bring down the entire structure, the Chhatris were falling off, the parapet was gone and varied floral patterns on the spandrels of the arches had been badly damaged by the vandals. And so it is not merely a routine job of restoration and of arresting further decay..."
- Sohail Hashmi, Historian

"The conservation works being undertaken by ASI - AKTC and its team is extremely challenging, and there is a conscious effort that all proposed conservation interventions is based on either in-situ or archival evidence, and nothing is based on conjecture".
- Lakshmi Priya, Conservation Architect

"Had anyone from Rahim's family been alive and in capacity of repairing their ancestor's memorial, they would have definitely ensured that the cracks developed over time would have never occurred and the incident of stealing of stone from Tomb would have never happened. In absence of any such custodian, it is important that we try to restore its original glory from whatever accurate information is available".
- Vikramjit Singh Roopral, Founder of Youth for Heritage Foundation

Rahim's grand mausoleum would have been a garden tomb as with Humayun's Tomb and Taj Mahal. Scientific clearance of earth was carried out in an effort to reveal any foundations of enclosure walls, remains of garden pathways, water features etc. Having found no archaeological evidence of the same, and in view of this a minimal charbagh has been proposed. Though the original landscape setting has been lost, an indication of how grand the northern gardens would have been is provided by the revelation of rooftop tanks. Rahim, who is known to have built elaborate water lifting structures in Burhanpur would have no doubt incorporated such a system here. In the space available a small formal garden is to be created to allow visitor movement and views to the monument. The garden will be planted with a citrus orchard and other plants known to have been favoured by the Mughals.

(Top) Excavation of Delhi Quartzite lower plinth revealed the original garden levels; (Bottom) Volunteers from InterGlobe Foundation participating in tree planting at the site



Tomb of Abdur Rahim Khan I Khanan:
LANDSCAPE PLAN

AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

SUPPORTED BY INTERGLOBE FOUNDATION