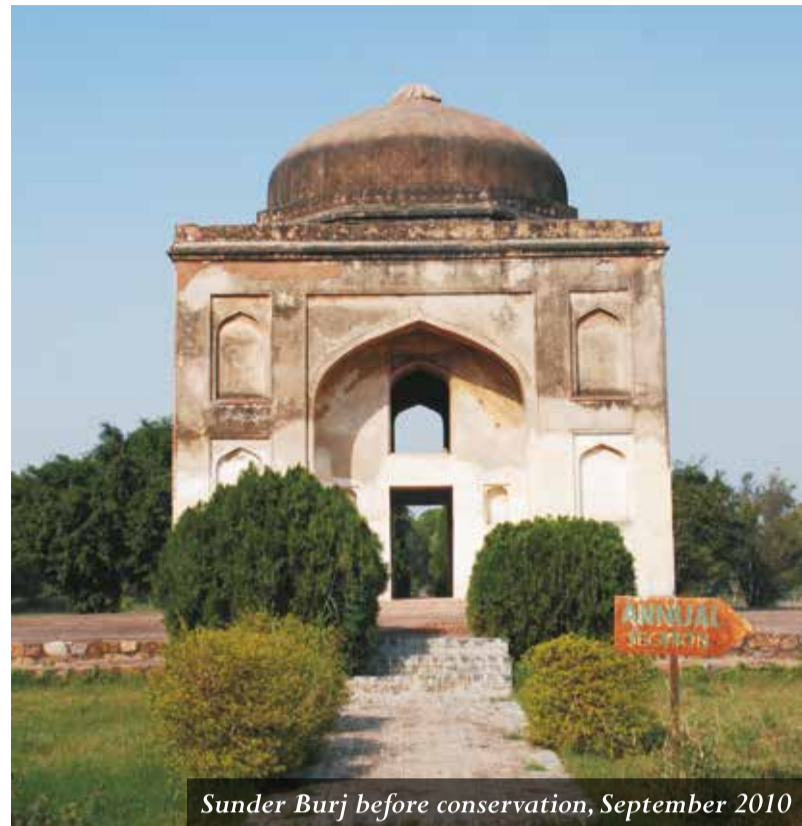


SUNDARWALA BURJ



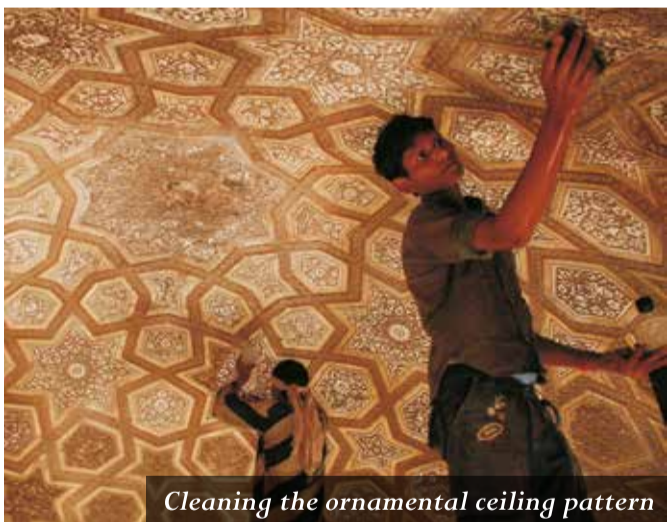
1930s Archival image of Mughal era Sunder Burj



Sunder Burj before conservation, September 2010



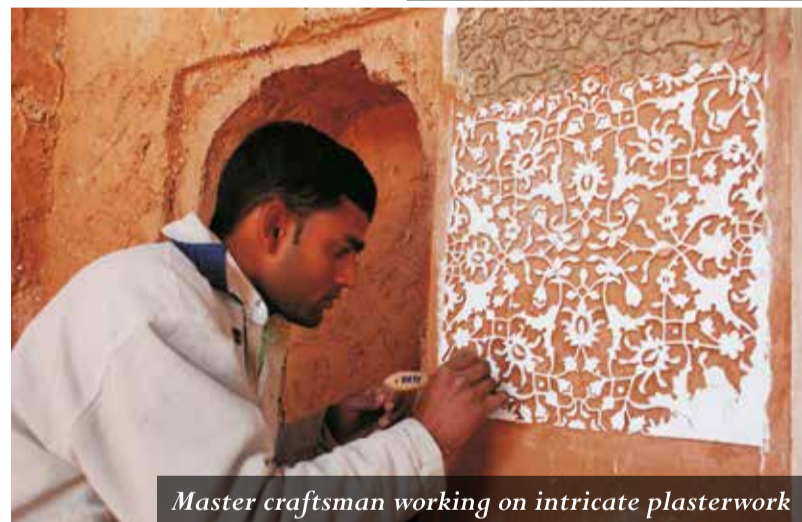
Conservation work on the dome



Cleaning the ornamental ceiling pattern



Cleaning Quranic calligraphy



Master craftsman working on intricate plasterwork

The Mughal era Sunder Burj features exquisite interior decoration comprising intricate incised plasterwork much of which has survived for over 400 years. Following a thorough condition mapping of its existing conditions, AKTC in partnership with ASI, and support of the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, commenced conservation works on the Sunder Burj in October 2010. The project has restored the architectural character of this significant monument, while simultaneously carrying out a landscape scheme to enhance the historic character of the setting of this significant structure.

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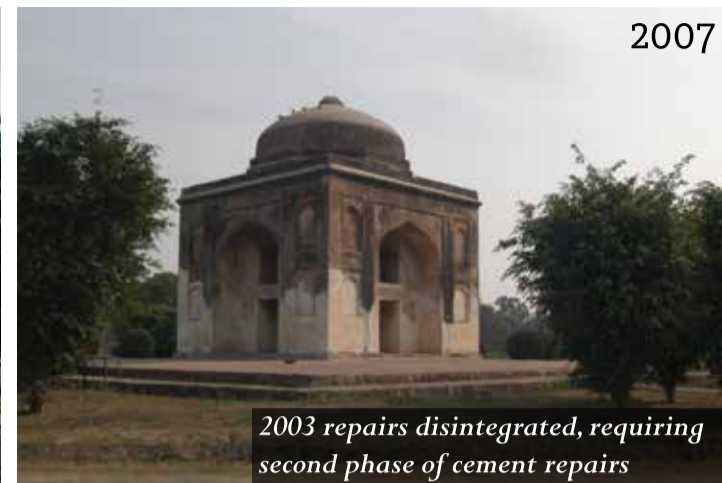


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SUNDAR BURJ: LOOKING NEW?



Conservation works on Sundar Burj were completed in 2012. As with several other structures in the Humayun's Tomb – Nizamuddin area of Delhi, here too conservation works included removal of 20th/ 21st century cement layers to reveal and restore the original Mughal architectural elements and materials.

Though the cement used in earlier repairs during 2003-07 had accelerated the deterioration of the softer 16th century lime plaster, it provided an appearance of 'ruin' to the monument, which was confused by many to represent 'age' or 'historicity' and thus be of value. By contrast, the conservation works which were carried out in 2010 by AKTC, were carried out using traditional materials authentic to the building such as lime mortar used by the 16th century builders. All conservation works, including removal of 20th century cement were carried out by master craftsmen familiar with traditional building crafts handed down since centuries in India.

Though the first few layers of lime plaster are prepared with a mix of lime with sand and brick dust, the final protective layer of lime plaster – only 1 mm thick – is composed of only lime and marble dust – both white in colour - and used by the 16th century builders to mimic the more desirable and expensive marble appearance. This application of the final plaster layer as part of the conservation effort

was essential both to ensure long term preservation and respect (and thus restore) the architectural intention of the original builders.

Though intricate ornamental details of the monument were mostly lost and required to be carefully and painstakingly restored – the resulting 'new' appearance of the historic building caused concern for some regular visitors accustomed to the ruinous look of 21st century cement.

From the onset of the project there was agreement that artificial means such as chemicals would not be applied to give a 'fake antique' appearance to the monuments and instead the natural processes would be allowed to restore a layer of patina – organic growth - that during monsoons would naturally grow on the traditional lime plaster mixed with traditional organic additives such as egg white and fruit pulp, jaggery in the layer below. The organic growth also enhances the protective nature of the final plaster layer as it fills up any cracks that would have developed in the lime plaster. Within two years from the completion of conservation works the patina of organic growth has returned to the dome of Sundar Burj.

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