



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 132
22nd December- 28th December

Editor's Note

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GROOM ADMITS RECEPTION HELD INSIDE

The haveli in Old Delhi where poet Mirza Ghalib spent the last years of his life is being used to host wedding parties, on the sly. There was little at Galib's haveli to show a wedding reception had been held here just hours earlier. There was some scarring of the floor though, enough to indicate what had taken place Sunday night. The Shopkeepers around the haveli declined to comment. However, when TOI contacted the groom whose wedding was being celebrated, he admitted the reception had indeed been held inside the haveli. The haveli is one of the 25 monuments declared protected by the department of archaeology. The department earlier this year identified 92 more structures to protect and conserve under the Delhi Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 2004. Since the enactment of the Act, the state department of archaeology is responsible for protection and conservation of monuments which are under ASI.

SOURCE

22nd December 2009, Times of India

ASI RESTORATION WORK MAKES CONSERVATIONISTS COMPLAIN

WITH the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) undertaking large scale conservation work before the upcoming Commonwealth Games, the changing look of heritage structures has sparked off a debate among conservationists and heritage enthusiasts. A section of heritage conservationists has expressed concern over the 'new' look of these monuments. Heritage structures like the Quli Khan's tomb near Mehrauli, Shakri Ghumti and Chhoti Ghumti in Hauz Khas, and tombs in the Lodhi Gardens are being restored, raising a debate over the 'real look' of these ruins. Conservationists argue that re-plastering of monuments makes them lose their 'heritage' look and appear like 'newly plastered buildings'. But the ASI and a section of conservation architects maintain that the re-plastered monuments will regain their antiquarian look over time. Conservationists engaged in restoring these monuments say to save these heritage structures from crumbling, it is necessary to replaster them, and that the 'new' look will soon fade away. "The texture of the domes looks new but it does not mean the monument has lost its authenticity. After exposure to two seasons of rain, the organic material in the plastering mixture starts changing colour. With constant exposure to rain and wind, a patina develops and the monuments, which now look new, will get back their antiquarian look," an official of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), which is conserving tombs in Lodhi Gardens, said. "In the tombs being restored in Lodhi Gardens, it was necessary to completely redo the plastering, as patchwork would have only increased the gap between the old and new layers of plaster. The original plaster of the dome was in a bad shape, hence proper consolidation was required,"

the official said. "But there can be instances where the ratio of lime, brick powder and other ingredients is not correct. In such cases, colour of the plastered portions might change abruptly and not remain in sync with the monument." ASI officials maintain that terms like authenticity and integrity of heritage structures sound good but during conservation several compromises have to be made for practical implementation. "It is easy for theoreticians and puritans to make arguments but during field conservation work, several factors have to be kept in mind. The conservation work has to be kept economical. Also, condition of the heritage structure needs to be taken into consideration," K K Muhammed, superintending archaeologist, Delhi Circle, ASI, said. " At times, complete replastering and heavy restoration work becomes necessary to protect a monument from crumbling." "To ensure uniformity and that the mixture has the right proportion of ingredients, it is made in factory sites like Tughlaqabad and Siri Fort, where largescale conservation work is being carried out.

SOURCE

22nd December 2009, Indian Express

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Students of Vidya Niketan School, Saket, participated in the heritage walk at SAFDURJUNG'S TOMB. The event was organised by THE INDIAN EXPRESS in association with INTACH and the Archeological Survey of India. THE tomb houses a garden, a great example of the Mughal Architecture. There is a huge tomb in the centre, underneath is Safdarjung's grave. There are four water canals that lead to four buildings. There are also four octagonal towers in the corners of this tomb, just like the Taj Mahal. On one corner of the garden is "Junglee Mahal". The name comes from the huge forest land beyond the garden, which has now been cleared for development purposes. On another corner is "Moti Mahal", which was meant to be for the queens and for the entertainment of the king. The main building of this tomb is made of red sandstone and the marble of Mathura. The "Junglee Mahal" has now been thrown open for visitors while the "Moti Mahal" has been turned into the office of the Indian Historical Monuments. One thing I didn't like was the scribbled walls of the tomb. The best part of the trip was our archaeologist who showed us around the tomb. The other thing I liked about the tomb was its Mughal architecture. It was a great experience to visit the tomb. ON December 4, a few classes of our school went for heritage walk to the Safdarjung Tomb. Outside the tomb, we met our guide who gave us a brief introduction about the place. The tomb was built in the memory of Mohammad Shah's prime minister Safdarjung by the latter's son Shuja-ud-Daula in 1754. Safdarjung's Tomb is often compared to Humayun's Tomb. However, this tomb was made up of reused material like white marble and red sandstone. Its architecture shows some of the characteristics of latter's architecture like arches and its dome was built like an onion with an inverted lotus upon it. This tomb is a two-storied building but looks bigger than its actual size. As Islamic architecture does not allow carving animal or human figures on a building, so the architects of the tomb made some complicated carvings that sometimes resemble plant figures. The tomb is surrounded by four buildings -- namely Moti Mahal in north, Raja ki Pasand in south, Junglee Mahal in west and a madarsa and mosque in the east direction. Everyone enjoyed the visit and loved the tomb. Besides, the carvings on the tomb were magnificent. OUR school took us on an excursion to Safdurjung's tomb. The Indian Express organised the heritage walk.

SOURCE

24th December 2009, Indian Express

CITY OUTRAGED, CALLS FOR ACTION

The TOI report on Monday that poet Mirza Ghalib's haveli in Ballimaran had been used to hold a private wedding function on Sunday night has shocked heritage and poetry lovers in the city. The poet had spent the last few years of his life in this 19th century

perhaps, the first instance of brazen misuse when a monument is in the care of Delhi government. A number of people said the government needed to be more proactive to ensure that such violations did not happen in future. Members of Ghalib Academy, an organization that celebrates Ghalib's poetry through cultural functions and other activities, and Urdu Academy which promotes the language, expressed outrage. "It's obvious that the government appointed watchman does not know anything about Ghalib and what he represents," said Anis Azmi of Urdu Academy. "There is no respect for heritage in the city. Syed Ahmed Khan's haveli in Old Delhi has been completely neglected and the house where Jawaharlal Nehru got married is also in a shambles. It is painful to know that Ghalib's haveli, where he spent his last days, is being used to host private functions." Added Dr Aqil Ahmed, secretary of Ghalib Academy: "It's not just the government that's responsible for misuse of the haveli. The occupants of the building are also guilty of letting this event take place. Everybody responsible should be brought to book." Noted conservation architect Ratish Nanda said: "Valuable heritage buildings like this haveli need to be carefully managed. The use of these buildings for any purpose should be governed by well-framed guidelines and any reuse should be for revenue generation and to help fund conservation." With many heritage structures falling to neglect and misuse, conservationist Nalini Thakur said there was a lack of understanding on the part of agencies on how to preserve heritage. "The government needs to identify a category of heritage and make rules about protecting it and follow these rules. The rules should be applicable to all the heritage buildings identified, be it Ghalib's haveli or Ajmal Khan park in Karol Bagh where MCD wants to build a stadium," she said. INTACH convener AGK Menon underlined the historical importance of Ghalib's haveli. "The haveli has been identified for further restoration by us and we also intend to include it in one of our heritage walks. The haveli has a place in Delhi's history and many people would want to know more about it. But the government needs to keep a close watch on this structure and take action if any rules have been violated," he said. According to Sanjeev Bhargava of Chandni Chowk traders association, misuse of Ghalib's haveli was a regular occurrence and it was time the government stood up to take notice. "The haveli is one of the most important heritage buildings in Old Delhi but the locals do not realise its value. The watchman is hardly seen there and people come here to dry their clothes or tether cattle," he said.

SOURCE

23rd December 2009, Times of India

GHALIB HAVELI CARETAKER SUSPENDED

A day after a case of criminal trespass was lodged following a wedding reception in poet Mirza Ghalib's heritage haveli, the state department of archaeology on Wednesday suspended the building's caretaker Ranjit Singh. A senior official of the department said: "Until the probe is completed, it is difficult to say who was responsible for the trespass on Sunday night but to ensure such an incident does not happen again, we are watching the monument round-the-clock now." The Delhi Police on Wednesday questioned security guard Ranjit Singh. The cops said those who trespassed inside have not been identified so far but they suspect the involvement of the security guard. Cops are also investigating the whereabouts of a man who posed as the caretaker on Monday morning at the site. DCP (central) Jaspal Singh said: "We have registered a case on the complaint and are investigating the case. We are in the process of identifying those who attended the party on that day." The police added that some locals were also present in the 18th century building on Sunday night. The haveli where Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib spent the last days of life had turned into a venue for a wedding party on Sunday night.

SOURCE

24th December 2009, Times of India

RESTORING PAST GLORY

For lovers of history, there is finally some good news. The newly established Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation (SRC) is all set to short list those heritages sites in Delhi which have fallen into disrepair due to neglect and are in dire need of restoration. These monuments are located mostly in Lutyen's Delhi, South Delhi, and in North Delhi. Says a spokesperson from SRC, "Heritage tourism in Delhi would get a shot in the arm after the formation of SRC, as we are undertaking the restoration work of these sites. Delhi has always been known for its rich heritage visible in terms of its monuments, arts, architecture and landmark buildings etc. However, most of these monuments have been encroached upon. Delhi is a historical city which has been ruled by several dynasties starting from Slave dynasty to the Mughals. Once we restore all the neglected monuments, people can get to know a lot about the historical significance of these sites." INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) has already identified 100 neglected monuments. Some of these old monuments which are very popular among local and foreign tourists will be restored to their pristine glory. DT also learnt that digital mapping would be done to all the buildings and monuments so as to prevent further damage. SRC will prepare and publish catalogues of heritage assets such as historical buildings and areas and zones with reference to their relevant period and significance in history. And what about funds? "Delhi government would provide us fund in addition to different agencies of government. If need be, we will take help from Japanese International Cooperation Agency," says the spokesperson.

SOURCE

24th December 2009, Times of India

THE LOST SUFI

IF you casually walk into the park in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar that houses the tomb of Sheikh abiruddin Auliya, you will likely walk out without having learnt anything about the man for whom this arge, obscure structure was built. A blue board declares the tomb to be a protected ASI monument', but here's no architectural or historical information about the tomb and the 10 tombstones that surround it. So you're even a half-curious tourist who wants to know when the structure was built, which dynasty it dates back to, or what it is made of. You're left to figure things out on your own. The tomb of Sheikh Kabiruddin Auliya is a tall square structure built of red sandstone and topped with a plastered dome. Its wooden gate is locked. It's only through the lattice work on its four walls that you can look at what's inside- a cluster of graves in a rather cramped, dusty room. People lounge in the park, most of them from the jhuggis - nearby. There are no tourists. The ASI caretaker, Prem, says, "It's a holy place. That's why it's locked. It belongs to some Sufi saint." He unlocks the gate and we count nine tombstones inside the tomb. In one corner of the room, we finally spot a small board that identifies the structure: 'Tomb of Sheikh - Kabiruddin Auliya (locally known as Lal Gumbad)'. Ask him about the 10 tombstones outside the Lal Gumbad and Prem says, "I have been told that a lot of travellers who visited the Tughlaq empire wanted this place to be their final resting destination." We know nothing of these nameless travellers, but who was Sheikh Kabiruddin? Very little is known of him as well. In his book, *City of Djinn*, William Dalrymple calls Kabiruddin "an impoverished mendicant" and a "wandering Sufi", of whom "nothing is now known". He lived during the period of the infamous Tughlaq monarch, Muhammad bin Tughlaq, who built Jahanpanah, considered to be the fourth city of Delhi, which now lies in modern south Delhi. Kabiruddin Auliya, according to Lucy Peck's *Delhi: A Thousand Years of Building*, was a disciple of Sufi saint Roshan Chirag Delhi, who was the spiritual successor of the worldrenowned Nizamuddin Auliya. His tomb is more than 600 years old. Clearly, unlike the other two Sufi saints, Nizamuddin and Roshan Chirag, to whom more prominent shrines were devoted and which today are better kept, Kabiruddin--who died in 1397--in his tomb does not draw too many visitors. But there are some who come and pay homage to him on Thursdays. "He still has the power to cure diseases, worshippers believe," Prem says. Incense sticks tucked at the bottom of the gate of the tomb tell this story of faith.

Besides the Lal Gumbad and the 10 surrounding tombstones, there is another square structure in the park. It's smaller in size and dilapidated. Its iron-grill door gives a view of all that is inside--two bags of cement and a pipe. "This could have been the residence of the caretaker of the monument at that time," surmises Prem. There's also a huge pile of garbage at one end of the park. "That side is disputed and so, uncared for," he explains. Pointing to the pile of stones around the monument, he says that repair work is going on and hopefully, the monument will get a facelift in time for the Commonwealth Games

SOURCE

27th December 2009, Indian Express

BRINGING THE MOUNTAINS DOWN

ALMOST in keeping with its name and nature of work, the Indian Mountaineering Foundation is located at a little height. Tucked as it is in one corner of the city on Benito Juarez Road, next to the South Campus of the University of Delhi, it's easy to miss the Tenzing Norgay Museum inside the Foundation. But Col Ravinder Nath, Director of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, says they get many visitors. "A number of schoolchildren visit the museum every month and so do mountaineers," he says. The museum with its unique and vast collection has a lot to offer to anyone interested in the Himalayas. A stone that Sir Edmund Hillary picked up during his Mount Everest expedition, the tools and kit used by H C S Rawat when he scaled the Everest in 1965, rare photographs by Serbjeet Singh, kits used by women mountaineers Bachendri Pal and Santosh Yadav, the first edition of the Himalayan Journal brought out in 1929, the minutes of the annual meeting of the Himalayan Club in Bombay in the same year are all part of the display in the two-storeyed museum. Besides, there are a number of dioramas of various peaks, detailed maps by Survey of India used during mountaineering expeditions, models, exhibits and equipment. The museum also has an entire section devoted to the last 200 years of mountaineering history, complete with rare pictures of legendary mountaineers, most of whom were Europeans. The most interesting display is surely equipment that was used to gauge the heights of the various peaks during an expedition way back in 1802. Established in 1997, the museum came 40 years after the Indian Mountaineering Foundation was formed. Apart from photographs, tools and models donated by mountaineers, it has a library with around 6,000 books and journals on mountaineering. The museum does not charge any fee and the Director will ensure that each and every exhibit is explained. And if you are the adventurous type, you can even try rock climbing at the Foundation or simply enjoy the sunset view from the building.

SOURCE

27th December 2009, Indian Express

GHALIB'S HAVELI TO GET FACELIFT

Conservationists and poetry lovers, marking Urdu legend Mirza Ghalib's 212th birth anniversary, rue the lack of public consciousness as well as the apathy on the part of the authorities towards the poet's heritage haveli. Heritage lovers were appalled by the recent incident in which Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib's over 200-year-old haveli in old Delhi was rented out to host a wedding reception. AGK Menon, convener of Delhi Chapter of INTACH which is soon expected to undertake restoration work of haveli, says while all misuse of the premise should be dealt with strictly according to the law, emphasis should also be put on developing heritage consciousness. "The Delhi government has asked us to finalise a proposal to restore the haveli of Ghalib and put up a museum there. "But as part of our programme to increase a sense of belonging among people for their cultural heritage, we are also planning heritage walks in Shahjahanabad, which houses the haveli," said Menon. Ghalib's haveli is up for restoration as it is in Shahjahanabad that lies on the Commonwealth heritage route and INTACH hopes to finish the work ahead of the Games.

SOURCE

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Should you have any comments or suggestions, you could reach us at

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