



## INTACH

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### PALACE THEIR PLAYGROUND

Even as the government gets busy with its preparations to highlight the city's rich heritage during the Commonwealth Games, the forgotten remains of a 14th century Tughlaq-era palace in south Delhi's Panchsheel Park area today serve as a playground for local children. Evidently, both the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the state archaeology department have been apathetic about the monument. The remains are situated inside a DDA park and portions of the facade are falling off because of neglect and vandalism by the locals. Surprisingly, the monument is not even mentioned in Intach's heritage listing of the 1,200 rare monuments in Delhi. This oversight, conservationists claim, will result in a big loss for the city. They say that the remains hint at what could have been a huge palace complex and excavation work around the structure could bring a lot of archaeological evidence to light. Said British writer Sam Miller, who has been pushing for protection and conservation of the palace remains: "Historians who have visited the site have said the structure appears to have been built either during the Tughlaq or Khilji period and basically, that it is the remains of a palace. The architecture clearly reveals the monument is from a pre-Mughal era. While three to four huge portions of the monument are above ground, a good part of the remains are underground and should be excavated." Miller claimed an ancient mosque situated near the monument was demolished a few years ago for development work related to the Commonwealth Games. He worries that unless a government body brings the remains under its protection, they could face a similar fate. The fortification wall of these palace remains appears to have been built on the same lines as Siri Fort wall — another reason why heritage experts believe the monument could be of the same era. Till a few years ago, the wall was only partially visible as it was surrounded by heavy green overgrowth, but that was recently cleared. "The monument needs to be studied from a historical perspective and conserved properly. Locals treat it as a playing ground and many residents have set up squatters on one side of the wall remains. Crucial archaeological evidence can be found here through excavation — as is being done by ASI in Siri Fort. It can also be developed as a prime tourist destination," said a heritage expert. Though the monument is technically a property of the DDA, conservationists said it was essential that the ASI or state archaeology department take upon themselves to protect it as DDA had no expertise in heritage conservation. A senior government official said: "Normally in cases where a monument is not under any kind of legal protection, it can be brought under the protection of the state or central government based on the recommendation of an expert committee or through court directions. For this to happen, a group of experts needs to visit the site to assess the archaeological significance and then start the process of notification based on a report."

## **SOURCE**

**31st March 2010, Times of India**

### **ASI LOSES INTEGRATION PLOT AS COURT ORDERS STAY**

CONSERVING MONUMENTS NEAR HUMAYUN'S TOMB THE Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) might have to shelve its plans to integrate the 11-acre plot of land opposite the Humayun's Tomb with the world heritage site for now. Two-and-a-half months after the ASI had taken over the land — referred to as Bharatiyam Complex — to develop it prior to the Commonwealth Games, the Delhi High Court ordered a stay on any further activity on the premises. The High Court order came after the Delhi State Bharat Scouts and Guides (BSG), who owned the land earlier, filed a petition against the Land and Development Office and others for demolishing BSG structures in the premises. On January 7 this year, the Ministry of Urban Development had handed over the plot to the ASI, ending a 12-year battle between the ASI and the BSG. The transfer was meant to facilitate the conservation of the two Centrally-protected monuments in the premises and their integration with the Humayun's Tomb. Nearly four years ago, a Supreme Court appointed monitoring committee had sealed the Bharatiyam Complex, after the BSG was found guilty of misusing the property by running commercial activities within the plot. The plot was de-sealed for the ASI to take over but before work could begin, the BSG reclaimed its office and filed a petition with the High Court. "We are awaiting this very valuable archaeological resource within a world heritage site to be secured, so that we are able to restore the Mughal complex and integrate it within the Humayun's Tomb world heritage site by the Commonwealth Games. But the court notice putting a stay on any further activity has come as a big hindrance. The hearing is slated for April 17 and we will have to wait until then," a senior ASI official said. The Bharatiyam Complex houses the Kunzru Stadium, Camp Office, VIP Room, Sports Complex, Bajpai Memorial Hall and the two Centrally-protected 17th Century monuments of Bada Batashewala Mahal and Chhota Batashewala Mahal.

## **SOURCE**

**30<sup>th</sup> April 2010, Indian Express**

### **NO CONCRETE ANSWER: CP PROJECT MIRED IN LIME, CEMENT DEBATE**

THE restoration process in Connaught Place is caught in a controversy again with a section of conservation architects alleging the disfiguration of the heritage structures due to use of cement. While the conservationists maintain that lime should have been used to retain the aesthetics and ensure durability of the buildings, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) claims that the original buildings were made in concrete. NDMC spokesperson Anand Tiwari said, "We did conduct tests and it was found that the original buildings were made of concrete so we also decided to use cement. The proposal (to use cement) was passed by the Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC)." Conservationists refuse to buy the argument. "The restoration process looks ad hoc. Cement plaster should not be used in instances of limebased masonry. The main buildings were made of lime but when alterations were made over the years cement was used. At least during the conservation process this time, lime should have been used," said Gurmeet Rai, director, Cultural Resource Conservation Initiative, a city-based heritage conservation consultancy. The issue has sparked off a debate with several conservationists up in arms against the alleged disfiguration of heritage structures. "During a recent visit to Connaught Place and Connaught Circus, I was shocked to find that wall surfaces, colonnades, ceilings and details were being systematically plastered with cement. The use of cement plaster on the historic fabric of Connaught Place is not just an aesthetic issue but will soon become a serious construction problem leading to serious deterioration of these buildings," Gaurav Sharma, a conservationist, said. He has written to several heritage bodies and conservation architects to take up the issue and stall work. AGK Menon, convenor, Delhi Chapter, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), has a different take. "Cement might have been used in the original buildings. It cannot be ascertained whether lime or cement was used in original construction as no test has been conducted by any independent body. We did approach the NDMC two years ago and also proposed a conservation plan but that was

ago, the colonial buildings were not protected and it was only late last year that the NDMC notified them as heritage structure ago and also proposed a conservation plan but that was not taken into consideration," he said. When the INTACH had taken up the issue two years ago, the colonial buildings were not protected and it was only late last year that the NDMC notified them as heritage structures. INTACH officials had then found it difficult to push for a conservation plan as the heritage structures were NDMC property and not notified. INTACH officials maintained that though it would have been ideal to use lime mortar as its durability is much more than cement and it also retains the aesthetic look of a heritage structure, stalling the work was not possible as it was being taken up by the NDMC on its property. "It is spilt milk and the civic body has already destroyed the structures. They wanted to beautify the buildings which they have done but with little consideration for their heritage conservation," an INTACH official said.

#### **SOURCE**

**30th March 2010, Indian Express**

#### **CAPTURE NATURE IN MINIATURE WITH BONSAI**

In a city growing vertically, bonsai provides the luxury of being close to nature. So even if you have a lush garden or none at all, growing mangoes and guava in the backyard isn't just a dream. Thanks to the art of bonsai, which is increasingly becoming popular in the city, nature-lovers can flaunt a green cover full of fruits and flowers right in their drawing rooms. Bonsai is the art of growing miniature trees in a pot. "It is a living art," said Neera Neelambara, president of Indian Bonsai Association in the city. "I love nature but I can't go to hills every time I feel like being close to greens. And considering the limited space in the city, not everyone has a garden to grow trees. That is where bonsai helps," she added. Neera has 100 bonsai trees of all shapes and styles on her terrace garden some of which are as old as 30 years. Though buying a bonsai is often an expensive bargain ranging between Rs 1,000 and Rs 30,000, making one at home can be a reasonable and an enjoyable venture. Anyone, who has the slightest love for trees, can learn to make a bonsai. "Making bonsai is as much a science as it is an art. By this method, we can grow as many trees as we want and can also retain some rare varieties," Neera said. To grow bonsai, she and other nature-lovers often got tree-cuttings from different places and grafted them in pots. "Last year, some of our members went to Taiwan for a convention and got back the cuttings of Barbados Cherry, Pyracantha, Chinese Elm which are not found here," she added. And growing bonsai is not just that. The 'artists' of bonsai train their dwarf trees to give them a shape, style and situation as close as real. So a bonsai tree can be made weather-beaten with a strip of its bark ripped off, it can have a hole in the trunk with some wood scooped out. Its root can be made to grow on a rock or it can also grow on one side as if swept away by the wind with proper wiring of branches. "You have to observe nature and trees to get the look of the bonsai right. If cared for properly, they can survive many years," Neera said. The National Bonsai Park at Lodhi Garden is also an attraction for the lovers of trees. The association is now holding a three-day bonsai exhibition at the park starting April 2 where nearly 150 bonsai trees will be displayed. There will also be demonstrations on making a bonsai. Shyama Balbir, another member of the Indian Bonsai Association, said, "The Bonsai Park was set up in 1985 and the number of visitors has increased drastically since then. As people are moving into flats, all they are left with is a balcony or a terrace to grow plants." She added, "So they like growing bonsai as they get to see the nature at home. These trees may be dwarf but they too have leaf drop, flowering and grow fruits. There is no mutation as is the myth." **Home-made Bonsai** Bonsai is the art and science of growing miniature trees. Originating in China and adopted by Japan, bonsai has become popular in the city too with several conventions, lectures, exhibitions and workshops taking place from time to time. Tree-lovers say bonsai plants live long enough to be passed down over generations.

#### **SOURCE**

**1st April 2010, Times of India**

## A VILLAGE BY THE WAYSIDE

HE SMELL of jaggery is overwhelming in Mehrauli village. As you wander through congested alleys avoiding stray cattle ambling around and errant humans speeding on two-wheelers, the smell suddenly strikes you. And stays for the entire time that you are in the village, making you wonder if this has been a trademark of the place ever since it came to be settled centuries ago. While the advent of the wholesale trade of jaggery in Mehrauli is unknown, what is of more significance is the antiquity of the place. As villages go, Mehrauli is pretty much unique. For one thing, it is a singular example of an area that has experienced continuous human habitation for a millennium and more. Given its proximity to a volatile national capital where empires fell every alternate century or not earlier and where today's emperors were the next day's exiles, the village's uninterrupted existence is incredible. Add to this the fact that entire cities were raised with much pomp in the vicinity only to collapse into the dust the moment their patron dynasties lost power. Siri, Jahanpanah, Firozabad, Dinpanah etc all came and went, but Mehrauli stayed put. The other aspect of the village was that it didn't just exist, but actually lived it up. From the time of the Slave dynasty when it was the hub of political activity to periods of relative seclusion in later centuries, the village and the area in its immediate vicinity served as the laboratory for testing new architectural techniques. The story began with the Jogmaya temple, to which are attributed many legends of Delhi's longevity as India's capital. But keeping with the focus of this story on built heritage, we need to flip to the second chapter when the Slave dynasty began raising the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque here. The mosque, built in 1193 by Qutub-din Aibak, was the first mosque to be raised in India by a ruling dynasty. Functioning as the congregational mosque of that era, it was a symbol of not just the might of Islam — as its name suggests — but of the might of the new political authority. In that sense, another tradition was born with several Hindu and Jain temples being reduced to rubble and the remains being used to create the mosque. A pattern thus established was repeated many times, in places as far afield as Jalore in west Rajasthan and Dhar in Madhya Pradesh.

Adding a degree of incongruity to the mosque is the Iron Pillar. Going by the research done by Meera Ishwar Dass, Convener of the Bhopal Chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), the pillar is of Gupta origin and was taken from Udaygiri near Sanchi and brought to its current location. If one pillar could be successfully moved, so could others. Firoz Tughlak (Reign 1351-1388) did exactly that when he brought Ashoka's pillars from distant places to his capital. About half a kilometer from the mosque, within the overgrown precincts of the Archaeological Park, is the site of the next significant experiment — the first arch made as a ceremonial gateway. That the delicate gateway leads to the tomb of Balban, a no-nonsense ruler who cared little for frills in his life, seems to show that even the austere began experimenting in the Mehrauli lab. This arch — repeated time and again — was perfected over time and became a constant feature of tombs, mosques and even secular architecture. Nearer to the mosque, the Qutab Minar was a successful experiment, being completed by Iltutmish (1210-1235) after Aibak had laid the foundation. However, the minar proved tough to replicate and later rulers chose to concentrate on just keeping it intact. Ala-ud-din Khilji (1296-1316) expanded the mosque and built magnificent ceremonial gateways of which the Alai Darwaza still stands. But his experiment to build a larger version of the minar came a cropper with the monstrous Alai Minar looking the closest earthlings came to building a Martian-looking structure. When the Qutab's top storey was damaged by lightning strike in 1378, Firoz Tughlak replaced the damaged part with two new stories. While repairing the minar in 1828 post some earthquake damage, the British added an oddity of their own — a cupola. This strange feature was thankfully removed some twenty years later and given a resting place in the grounds of the Qutab complex. To assuage the water shortage in the area, Iltutmish began another building tradition when he built the Gandhak-kibaoli which was the first step-well in the rather dry Delhi region. He also created a large tank called the Hauz-ishamshi in Mehrauli. Legend has it that the Prophet appeared in a dream to him pointing the place at which to build the tank. The next morning, Iltutmish noticed a hoof-print of the Prophet's horse at which spot he proceeded to build a small pavilion within the tank. The tank is smaller today than when it was built but the pavilion still stands. So does the Jahaz Mahal, built alongside the tank by the Lodis whose reign (1451-1526) also saw the construction of the Rajaon-ki-baoli, unarguably Delhi's finest step well

This, however, was the sunset period for the lab. Lutyens and Baker concentrated their efforts further to the north. The builders moved away, leaving behind a heritage trail each step of which created so much in its wake. The early Mughal period saw Shaikh Fazlullah - also known as Jamalibeing interred at a site now in the Archaeological Park. The boxlike tomb he shares with an unknown person 'Kamali' is a design not repeated. Tombs of noblemen came up rapidly in this period, with those of Adham Khan and Quli Khan being notable. In the last days of the Mughal Empire, the court used to move here on occasions with the last Mughal Bahadur Shah Zafar creating the Zafar Mahal in the village. Accompanying the court was the British resident Sir Thomas Metcalfe. With the ability of Indian rulers to make architectural experiments at an end, Metcalfe seemed to take over the lab. His efforts came through in the form of some structures best described as 'follies'. He stripped Quli Khan's tomb of the grave converting the building into a pleasure house, adding a boathouse nearby along with living quarters for visiting British guests with inbuilt fireplaces apart from creating a series of cupolas all over.

#### **SOURCE**

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2010, Economic Times**

#### **ILLEGAL BUILDING BLOCKS TOMB**

An attempt by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to remove encroachment on public land, right next to a 14th century monument, was halted amid high drama by protesting public in Hauz Khas village. On Thursday, an MCD team had gone to demolish the illegal construction along with a team of Delhi police. The construction was being carried out blatantly within a few feet of the compound wall of the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) protected Tomb of Firoz Shah. A three-storey building is being constructed on public land just outside the boundary wall on the eastern side of the monument. A senior ASI official, on conditions of anonymity, said the agency had lodged several complaints with the local police since the construction began. "Last week too we approached the police. Senior officials from the civic body and the Delhi police did come but after some time they left without any action," the official added. Both MCD Deputy Commissioner of South Zone and Deputy Commissioner of Police were present on the spot around noon. But soon after the action started, a large group of local people came to the spot and started heavy protest, including shouting and wailing. "The Deputy Commissioner of MCD South Zone had planned action against encroachment on the public land and unauthorised construction at property No.9 A, Hauz Khas Village. The local police had also been informed in advance of the proposed action," MCD Director Press and Information (Press and Information) Deep Mathur said. "Despite stiff resistance from the crowd, the MCD managed to seal an unauthorized constructed floor. Meanwhile, keeping in view the law and order position, the Police advised to suspend the operation," Mathur said. The owners of the building assured the civic body that they would themselves remove the encroachment. "The MCD officials had taken two bulldozers with necessary equipment and staff with them but the police force was found wanting in action" Mathur said. It was on the advice of the police, that the MCD temporarily suspended its operation. The Director (press) said the MCD will again take up the action against encroachment and unauthorized construction in coming days as soon as adequate police force is made available.

#### **SOURCE**

**3<sup>rd</sup> April 2010, Hindustan Times**

#### **DUCKS DIE IN NDMC POOL IN LODHI GARDEN**

Morning walkers at Lodhi Garden were in for a shock on Saturday. The regulars at one of the most popular gardens in the capital saw ducks that normally contribute to a picture of serenity in the park lying dead in a dry pool. Though onlookers claim they spotted some 13 dead ducks, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), which is responsible for the lake's upkeep, claimed six ducks had died so far. WHAT WENT WRONG? The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working for animal welfare in the city and the morning walkers alleged the deaths have been caused due to scarcity of water in the canal due to the rising temperature in the city. They further alleged the lake had not been cleaned for quite

“The water is so filthy, it is impossible for these ducks to survive. Also, the right side of the canal has dried up and is full of muck making it impossible for the ducks to move,” said Gautam Grover of Animal Saviour. “The scarcity of water has already killed a lot of fish. Dead fish have been decaying there for quite some time. The water could have turned poisonous,” he added. **UNCLEAN LAKE** Geeta Bhargava, a resident of Defence Colony, who had come to the garden around 6 a.m. on Saturday for a walk found the ducks lying in the ditch. “I saw as many as 10 dead ducks while a number of ducks were stuck in the muck and seemed to have been infected,” Bhargava said. She further added that for the past 10 days the water level of the canal had been declining and the lake had not been cleaned for quite some time. “I myself saw a passer-by removing four dead ducks from the small hut meant for these ducks,” she said. **NDMC BLAMES DOGS** The NDMC however claimed that stray dogs had attacked the ducks and while six died, eight were injured. “There are a number of dogs in the vicinity and they attacked the ducks. While some died on the spot, others tried to run but got stuck in the muck. We rushed them to the veterinary hospital at Moti Bagh where the injured are being treated,” said Subhash Chandra, director, horticulture department, NDMC. NGOs and morning walkers rubbish the NDMC's claims. “The dogs in the area are well fed and have never attacked ducks in the past. Why would they do it now? Also, a number of ducks were rescued from the muck so how could it be a case of a dog attack?” said Grover. **OVERCROWDING** The civic body has now started cleaning the pond and has shifted the ducks to the left side of the pond. Also, an enclosure has been erected around the pond to restrict the entry of dogs. The civic body officials also said the carrying capacity of the pond is 30-40 ducks, but the number has been increasing and the water in the pond is proving to be inadequate. “There were a total of 14 ducks that we found out. Six of them were killed by the dogs.

#### **SOURCE**

**4th April 2010, Hindustan Times**

#### **TRAPPED IN MUCK, THEY WERE EASY PREY**

Morning walkers in Lodhi Garden stopped in their tracks on Saturday when they found some ducks lying dead near the artificial lake close to Gate No 4. Several more were lying injured in and around the lake that had recently been drained of water for cleaning, some of them caught in the algae and mud slush that lined the floor of the lake. As people watched horrified and some tried to help, the remaining ducks were transferred to another pond on the other side of the Athpula bridge by NDMC workers, this time protected by a net. Officials claimed that the ducks had been attacked by stray dogs in which six had perished and about eight were injured. However, regular visitors to the garden found the explanation hard to digest. Geeta Bhargava, who saw the dead ducks when she arrived at the park at 5.45 am, said the birds appeared to have got trapped in the slush on the floor of the lake and were not able to move. Others were lying around dead and another walker was picking them up and putting their bodies in a small enclosure nearby. “I was horrified by the sight. The guards told me that there had been a dog attack but the number of birds that are dead or injured indicate that it could be something else. The dogs have always been around — so why would they attack so many birds all of a sudden? Why did NDMC not remove the birds in the first place when the lake had started drying up,” she said. Other walkers pointed out that the lake had been stinking for the past few days and it had become imperative for NDMC to clean it. According to those working at the garden, water supply to the lake had been stopped a few days back. “On Friday night, the birds must have been trying to cross over to the other side of the bridge when they got trapped and the dogs found an easy target,” said one. The dogs reportedly also got into an enclosure that was built specially for ducks with hatchlings, injuring a couple of newly-hatched chicks. The veterinary doctor who treated the injured birds claimed he found puncture wounds and blood on most of them, indicating an attack possibly by dogs. “It is highly unusual that so many birds were injured but Lodhi Garden has had a sudden influx of dogs recently. There are about 40 strays that pose a danger not only to the birds but also to the walkers but we can't do anything about that,” said an official.

#### **SOURCE**

**4th April 2010, Times of India**

## HAUZ KHAS LAKE RAISES STINK

With the government having failed to take care of Delhi's natural heritage, citizens are increasingly taking it on themselves to do the needful. The residents of Safdarjung Enclave have taken up the cause of Deer Park and the Hauz Khas lake inside it. They have been holding well-attended public meetings regularly and have even taken up the matter with the environment ministry. At present, the 13th century water body built by Alauddin Khilji is in a pathetic condition with untreated sewage supplied to it on many occasions. Mosquito breeding in the still water has become a problem and people find it hard to walk by due to the stench. Pankaj Agarwal, a resident of Safdarjung Enclave, told TOI that they had raised the issue with DDA several times but it had failed to take any corrective action. "Untreated sewage has been flowing into the lake for almost five years now. Earlier, the management and redevelopment of the lake had been with INTACH when its condition had improved considerably. Now, it is impossible to even go near it because the water stinks. Officials keep promising they would take action but have barely managed to do anything," he said. Residents say that when the water body was dry, there was some greenery around with trees and plants growing inside it and the area was kept clean. Some years back, however, it was decided to fill it up with treated sewage from Vasant Kunj except that the sewage doesn't seem treated at all. In fact, the chairman of the Environment Pollution Control Authority, Bhurelal, had pulled up Delhi Jal Board officials just last month for the highly degraded quality of treated sewage that was being supplied to the Deer Park. Jasjit Purewal, another resident, decided to take up the matter with the ministry of environment and forests, which sent a team to take water samples for testing. "The lake has become a sewage body now. All the fish are dead and there is massive mosquito breeding taking place. In fact, in order to rid the lake of algae, daily wage labourers are made to dive into the water body and clean it manually. Aerators — machines that are used for pumping air into the water and for giving still water some movement — are rusting at the edge of the lake. Whose idea was it to fill the lake with sewage water and why are they so incapable of maintaining it now?" she asked.

**SOURCE**

**5th April 2010, Times of India**

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

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