

# Constructing and Consuming 'Heritage': Humayun's Tomb in Popular Perception

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Science in Architecture Studies**  
at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
September 2003

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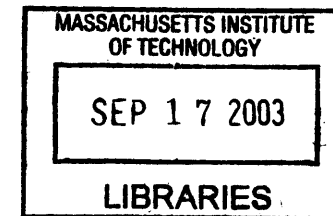
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### ABSTRACT

A host of political and spiritual associations were constructed around Humayun’s Tomb that established it as the most important political and spiritual site in the city during the sixteenth century. After an initial phase of importance, the tomb began to slip into physical decrepitude and neglect. Though the tomb underwent several changes in the subsequent three centuries, it never regained its original status as a ‘Mughal dynastic icon’. One of the primary aims of the intervention efforts by various agencies like the ASI, UNESCO and AKTC has been to stimulate popular interest and appreciation of Humayun’s Tomb as ‘heritage’.

In spite of its obvious monumental stature and architectural merit, Humayun’s Tomb’s political and spiritual significance are no longer central to its popular perception. The tomb’s initial narrative as the product of a socialized and historicized understanding of political associations in conjunction with ascribed spiritual sanctity has eroded. This underlines the need for such a study that unravels the popular consumption of the tomb’s ‘heritage’ or the lack thereof. The principal concern of this thesis is to identify the reasons why the meanings associated with Humayun’s Tomb remain lost to contemporary popular perception.

The thesis follows the trajectory of popular interpretation from the time of the tomb’s construction till now. In doing so it deals with the complex set of political, religious, architectural and spiritual associations of the building that contributed to its representation and perception. It explores the agencies and processes instrumental in constructing the monument’s evolving narrative and its consumption through various themes - a dynastic icon, ‘prototype of the Taj Mahal’ and ‘heritage’ to mention a few. Through an exploration of these themes, this thesis tries to answer why this once-celebrated monument has retained so little of its originally constructed narrative.

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Sadaf Ansari

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

For Mahju and Saif, whose presence made MIT special  
For Mummy, whose prayers have always seen me through

For everyone who believed in me and urged me on



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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **In Search of a Popular Narrative**

*"... the mausoleum of Hazrat Jannat Ashiyani (His Majesty Nestling in Paradise) Humayun Badshah ... that great funerary enclosure which is the most noble and august among the sacred places of that land."*<sup>11</sup>

*Badshahnama, 1634*

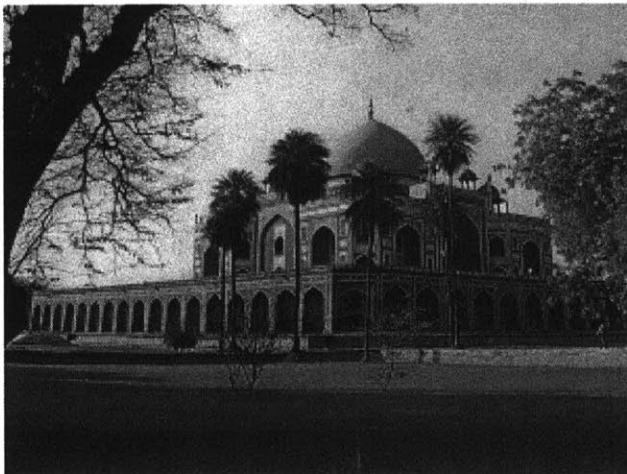
*"...not only one of the most arresting examples of the building art in India, but also an outstanding landmark in the development of the Mughal Style."*<sup>12</sup>

*Percy Brown, 1942*

*"Its the insiders best-kept secret in historical and architectural terms."*<sup>13</sup>

*Tom Kissinger, 1997*

Fig.1. Humayun's Tomb and garden in the contemporary context.



Humayun's Tomb is a mausoleum built in the sixteenth century for the second Mughal Emperor in India by Akbar, his son and successor to the dynasty. It is a red-sandstone and white-marble structure (Fig.1). The tomb is placed in the middle of an elaborate garden setting, marked with cross-axial pathways, waterways and pools. It is situated on a flat stretch of land on the outskirts of contemporary urban New Delhi (India), located next to the bank of River Yamuna (Fig.4).

The three appraisals quoted above represent some of the many perceptions of Humayun's Tomb. This thesis traces the historic trajectory of the tomb and studies the evolution of its narrative comprising of its architectural, political and spiritual associations. It argues that these associations and meanings are missing in the popular perception of the tomb and this prevents its consumption as 'heritage'.

### 1.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUMAYUN'S TOMB

The tradition of Islamic rule in India was established by the Slave dynasty in 1206 and continued through successive centuries by the Tughluqs, the Khiljis and the Lodis.<sup>4</sup> Babur established the Mughal Dynasty after the battle at Panipat in 1526 where he defeated Ibrahim Lodi, the *Sultan*<sup>5</sup> of Delhi. Babur had a short rule in India from 1526 to 1530 as the first Mughal Emperor, with the capital located at Agra. His rule did not bring about any lasting changes in the socio-political scenario of the empire.<sup>6</sup> However, Babur did leave behind the mark of the advent of the Mughal dynasty in India in the form of some modest architecture<sup>7</sup> (Fig.2). His death in 1530 was followed by the discontinuous reign of his son and successor, Humayun.

Humayun had a brief rule as the second Mughal emperor from 1530 to 1540 and then from 1555-56.<sup>8</sup> During his reign, he undertook the construction of the city of Din Panah after shifting the capital back to Delhi from Agra (Fig.3). Unlike other emperors like Akbar who planned their own mausoleums during their lifetimes, his untimely death in an accident in 1556 precluded that. Hence, the only architectural imprint of Humayun's rule is the crumbling ruin of the city of Din Panah in Delhi. His mausoleum was built by Akbar (his son and successor), and its construction was supervised in part by Haji Begum<sup>9</sup>, his wife (also known as Bega Begum).

Historians regard Akbar as the greatest Mughal Emperor. He established the largest unified empire in India since Ashoka's rule.<sup>10</sup> He was responsible for introducing key changes in the administrative framework that affected the socio-political setup of the empire.<sup>11</sup> His rule is also acknowledged as unprecedented for the development of Mughal architecture in India.<sup>12</sup> When the construction of Humayun's Tomb was begun, he stayed in Delhi for brief spells, overseeing the project. His later visits assumed a pattern of perambulation of selected sites in the city, primary amongst which was the

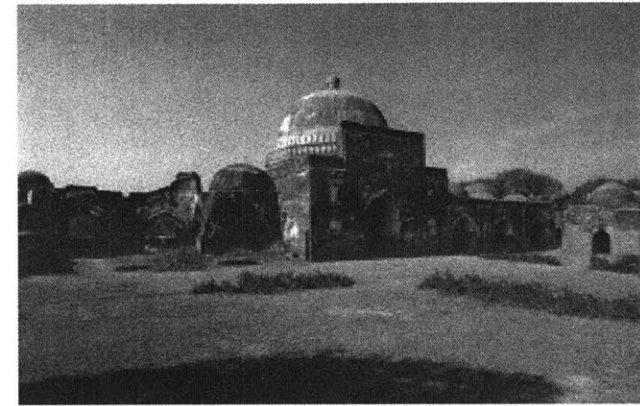


Fig. 2. One of Babur's buildings- Baburi Masjid (1527) at Panipat.

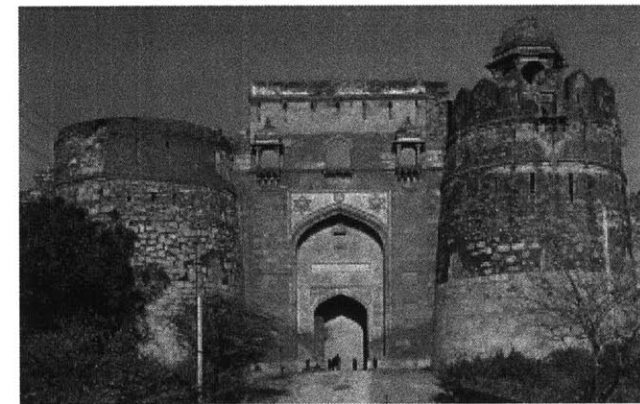


Fig. 3. View of the Talaqi Darwaza, part of the surviving ruins of the city of Din Panah (1533) built by Humayun in Delhi.

tomb. These visits were ritualistically continued after his reign by subsequent Mughal rulers. This chronology of Mughal Imperial visits to Delhi<sup>13</sup> was critical for the construction and subsequent perpetuation of the image of Humayun's Tomb as a dynastic icon and a venerated site. The location of the tomb in the immediate vicinity of the dargah of Nizamuddin Auliya, a popular Sufi saint, added to its perceived sanctity.

The tomb, originally a place of dynastic significance eventually became a place of political and spiritual import in Delhi during the first century of Mughal rule. This status changed when Shahjahan (Akbar's grandson) began building the city of Shahjahanabad in 1638, located at a distance of approximately ten kilometers from Humayun's Tomb, and moved the capital back to Delhi from Agra upon its completion. This move marked the break of the political and spiritual associations of the tomb in the absence of its Mughal patronage. This was followed by a period of physical decrepitude stemming out of imperial neglect.

The next important stage in the history of the tomb was triggered by the Revolt of 1857<sup>14</sup> when the British army captured Bahadur Shah Zafar (the last Mughal Emperor) from Humayun's Tomb, where he had fled to seek refuge. The British Crown officially took over India as its colonial rulers in 1858. The tomb, located in an uninhabited area outside the city, was acquired by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for preservation in 1881.<sup>15</sup> While the tomb structure had survived without any structural damage and was not in need of physical intervention, the garden was restored after the excavation and relaying of the original layout<sup>16</sup> during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The ASI also introduced new British landscape elements during the project.<sup>17</sup> This was a period when the building was museumised as 'heritage' of the Indian people. However, the building was unable to incite popular interest.

Matters continued in this manner till the last quarter of the twentieth century when Delhi expanded beyond its established urban boundaries. The new capital struggled in its attempt to reconcile its present with its historic past. Humayun's Tomb, located on the outskirts of Delhi's urban expanse had continued to exist in relative anonymity in the post independence era (at both tourist and urban levels), in spite of its proximity to Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah*.<sup>18</sup> After decades of neglect, the tomb was inscribed on the 'World Heritage List' of the 'Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage' in 1993.<sup>19</sup> Through this designation, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) had recourse to technical assistance and funds from United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for carrying out necessary repairs and changes to integrate the tomb into the 'heritage map' of the city. The tomb has also been the recipient of a recent grant of \$650,000 made by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)<sup>20</sup> towards the restoration of the garden and landscape of the tomb complex in 1997. The project was completed in April 2003.

These late-twentieth century interventions by international agencies have generated some tourist and urban interest. The tomb has benefited at a spatial level, yet its status at a symbolic level remains unchanged. In spite of its international designation as 'heritage' and the attempts to help it regain its lost physical and symbolic glory, the efforts to establish Humayun's Tomb as a popular monument remain in vain.

## 1.2 MONUMENTS AND THEIR EVOLVING NARRATIVE

A monument can be defined as the tangible manifestation of a gesture of preservation in the face of disintegration, diffusion and disappearance of a certain set of ideas or events.<sup>21</sup> Monuments are the storehouse of the past;<sup>22</sup> they commemorate shared values,<sup>23</sup> events and people. Monuments are landmarks - of human endeavor and for human inspiration. They stand out by virtue of their physical attributes, their larger

than habitual size, their appearance and embellishment. Inherent to the process of building a monument is the addition of meaning to its built form.<sup>24</sup> These meanings are attributes of form and function, also of time and context. Monuments add meaning to the present through their association with the past, thereby giving the present a past. Memory associated with them persists, evoked by their physical presence even after the passage of time. However, for memory to persist there is a need to observe, interpret and create the narrative upon the bedrock of material things.

Perception of a monument is not simply a product of its physical experience. Perception works in combination with its symbolic experience- its narrative. The narrative of a building is the cumulative of its form, function and meaning. Narrative is 'not merely a neutral discourse that may or may not be used to represent real events' but rather 'entails ontological and epistemic choices with distinct ideological and even specifically political implications'.<sup>25</sup> Interaction between historic buildings and people is dynamic. It is this process through which every viewer forms a relationship to the building through an assimilation/appropriation of its narrative through changing contexts. Hence, the narrative discourse can never be free of these constructs.<sup>26</sup> The narrative of Humayun's Tomb included social, cultural, political and religious themes. Practices like prayers, rituals, festivals, pilgrimage etc., in addition to the significance of its location, size, function and form, had acted as agencies to build its narrative.

Narratives of monuments are not constant. Original themes and meanings may be modified or completely lost over time. New associations may be forged as appropriate to changing social and political contexts. In such situations, the narrative is constructed by various agencies in a process of dynamic interaction between the monument and time, with context as the catalyst. An understanding of this process is critical to the study of historic buildings and to understand their existence as part of our present.

Monuments like Humayun's Tomb were not meant to be mute symbols of the past - they were intended to continue narrating the meanings associated with them.<sup>27</sup> This study addresses the evolving narrative of Humayun's Tomb and its popular perception through time. The '*popular perception*' of a historic structure is seen here as its overriding or most prevalent perception. It highlights that the relation between people and monuments is dynamic and undergoes change. It engages in a discussion about the meanings associated with Humayun's Tomb and their perception in popular imagination that has constructed its evolving narrative and prompted its consumption as heritage. In the end, this study brings to light the conflicts between the legacy of the past and the values of the present.

### 1.3 SCOPE AND NEED OF THE RESEARCH

Humayun is not a particularly significant historic figure, but his tomb assumed significance both spatially and symbolically at the time it was built. As a building, the architecture of the tomb is monumental in scale and stark. The tomb holds architectural significance as the first major monument constructed in India by the Mughals; its grand scale, proportional and decorative schemes and garden layout set the standards that affected later Mughal structures in many ways. In terms of historic significance, the tomb is also associated with a host of socio-political themes of the Mughal rule in the sixteenth century, especially from the reign of Akbar- its patron.

Very little work has been done in the way of a unified analysis of the spatial and symbolic perception of Humayun's Tomb in the popular imagination across time. Most studies have been restricted to an analysis of its architecture, geometry of the tomb and symbolism of its garden setting in isolated time periods. This thesis, in conjunction with previous research, is an attempt to establish an understanding about these aspects in popular perception across a wide time frame.

After an initial phase of importance, the tomb began to slip into physical decrepitude and neglect in the seventeenth century. Though the tomb underwent several physical and symbolic changes in the subsequent three centuries, it never regained its original status as a 'Mughal dynastic icon'. One of the primary aims of the intervention efforts by various agencies like the ASI, UNESCO and AKTC has been to stimulate popular interest and appreciation of Humayun's Tomb as 'heritage'- through consumption of the physical experience, history and meanings attributed to it. The physical experience has been enhanced through intervention directed at the restoration and preservation of the tomb and its garden.

The meanings associated with the tomb remain lost to contemporary popular perception; as a result the tomb continues to be regarded with relative disinterest. The principal concern of this thesis is to understand the reasons for the failure of these attempts to revive popular interest in the tomb in both residents and visitors.

As a secondary concern, the thematic analysis addressed by this study assumes significance for India. Establishing and maintaining its status, as a tolerant society in the global perception, has become a pressing need for India in the face of communal tension and regularly erupting religious discord. Humayun's Tomb is one of the few buildings that represent a past of 'harmonious co-existence' between the country's Hindu and Muslim populations during Akbar's rule. This is in stark contrast to the popular perception of the past represented by the Qutub complex, which has recently been used as tool to project iconoclastic attributes for Islamic rulers<sup>28</sup> in India upon the then extant Hindu population.<sup>29</sup> Humayun's Tomb's construction and consumption as a symbol of a 'shared past' is a possible option to offset such sentiments. This underlines the need for such a study that unravels the popular consumption of the tomb's 'heritage' or the lack thereof.



#### 1.4 DELINEATING THE OBJECTIVES

This study began as an attempt to document chronologically, the changes in physical form and symbolic associations of Humayun's Tomb and analyzed the factors contributing to them. During the course of the study, it became apparent that the popular perception of the building, while undergoing change, has not been an outcome of merely its physical form but stems from a combination of various contextual and imposed associations. Hence, the focus of the study shifted to an identification of the forces that have controlled and shaped these associations through time.

A host of political and spiritual associations were constructed around the tomb at the time it was built in the sixteenth century. Primary among these was Akbar's political manifesto. The religious sanctity ascribed to the tomb through its proximity to Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* and a sequence of Mughal imperial visits that added a spiritual dimension to the perception of the tomb have also been explored. The first section of the thesis discusses how these contributed to the narrative of the tomb and established it as the most important political and spiritual site in the city during the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

The narrative of the tomb has been reworked over time. Some of the themes associated with the tomb have had little to do with the initial intent and audience of the building. The manner in which visitors to Humayun's Tomb have appreciated and interpreted it during the last century has been shaped simply by their cognitive understanding of the tomb as a historic building. In spite of its obvious monumental stature and architectural merit, Humayun's Tomb's political and spiritual significance has never been central to the popular imagination. The tomb's initial narrative as the product of a socialized and historicized understanding of political associations in conjunction with ascribed spiritual sanctity has eroded.

The thesis follows the trajectory of popular interpretation from the time of the tomb's construction till now. In doing so it deals with the complex set of political, religious, architectural and spiritual associations of the building that contributed to its representation and perception throughout the ages. It explores the agencies and processes instrumental in constructing the monument's evolving narrative and its consumption through various themes - a dynastic icon, 'prototype of the Taj Mahal' and 'heritage' to mention a few. Through an exploration of these themes, this thesis tries to answer why this once-celebrated monument has retained so little of its originally constructed narrative.

### **1.5 METHODOLOGY**

The location and articulation of Humayun's Tomb charged it with a variety of dynastic, spiritual and political associations at the time it was built. These have subsequently undergone much changes as discussed. The research begins with a documentation of these changes and then evaluates the primary forces that appear to control these changes. The discussion is organized along a chronological framework of analysis of the changes. The tomb's history suggested that its past could be organized into three dominant and identifiable themes. Each of these primary themes (along with some secondary themes) directed the trajectory of the tomb's popular perception in specific time frames. The designation of time frames is substantiated by the operating context. These time frames are by no means absolute or disjointed; their corresponding themes overflow from one into the other and cannot be examined in isolation. Rather, they are best understood as a continuum of overlapping modifications of old themes.

The first period is the Mughal era; it is focused on the time of the tomb's construction in mid-sixteenth century. This section explores the symbolism the tomb was charged with in context of the political, religious and spiritual manifesto of its patron. It ends

with the tomb's isolation from the city and its residents at the end of the seventeenth century. The second time-period elaborates the tomb's continuing isolation, ending with its inclusion as part of 'Indian heritage' in the first quarter of the twentieth century, exploring the physical and symbolic changes instituted under the aegis of the ASI. The third time period addressed is that of independent India in the last quarter of the twentieth century, with the focus on its recent integration into the patrimony of 'international heritage' through the agencies of UNESCO in 1993 and the AKTC in 1997.

Before launching into the specifics of the three time periods, the study introduces Humayun's Tomb through a documentation of its site and surroundings. Though there are a number of historically significant structures within the large tomb complex and its surrounding area, these have not been dealt with in detail. The focus remains on the tomb, as other structures are subsidiary at best and for this particular study, a complete understanding of the tomb does not need a detailed insight into their architectural features and histories.

## 1.6 SOURCES

The thesis builds its theoretical analysis on a framework of existing discourse about 'monuments', 'narrative' and 'heritage'. Only key texts used have been listed in the bibliography. Discussion about historic facts and formal analysis of the tomb's architectural features has been developed from the work done by Glenn D. Lowry, *The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*. Lowry's work documents 1) the physical aspects of the tomb, 2) its construction details, and 3) its history within the framework of the prevalent architectural trends at that time (in India and the Islamic world). While his work focuses on the themes within the specific period when it was built, this thesis identifies such themes in a frame of time that encompasses the entire history of

the tomb- from its construction in the sixteenth century till today. Another source for understanding the historic associations of the tomb in the political and spiritual realm is Ebba Koch- *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology: Collected Essays*.

For understanding and identifying historic facts and themes of the Mughal era, the English translations of key texts like Babur's *Babur-nama*, Abu'l Fazl's *Ain-I Akbari* and *Akbar-nama* and Gulbadan Begum's *Humayun-nama*, have been referred to, the Arabic/ Persian originals have not been used. For the period of the construction of the tomb, these texts contain very few direct references to its formal qualities and design layout. Though inferences have been drawn from these records, there is no pictorial or drawn depiction of the original layout. This has remained a problematic issue with the research as well as the conservation efforts for the tomb- debate still persists about the original layout of the garden.

There are some travelers' accounts from late-sixteenth through early-nineteenth century (see bibliography), before the onset of the formal documentation of the British colonial surveys. But these travelers and scholars who visited India mentioned the tomb only in passing, with their focus on the socio-political and cultural context of the times. However, the British era of late nineteenth and twentieth centuries is well documented and archaeological sources abound like Stephen Carr's work published in 1876- *The Archaeology and Monumental Remains of Delhi*. The principal works from the colonial era are James Fergusson- *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, Percy Brown- *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* and E. Havell- *Indian Architecture, its Psychology and History from the First Muhammadan Invasion to the Present Day*. These texts serve three purposes for this study- they provide a descriptive documentation of the physical condition of the tomb, they analyze its role in the sequential development of Mughal architecture and their contents reflect the manner in which the tomb was being constructed and

perceived by the academia. *The Progress Reports of The Archaeological Survey of India* (1903-1916) form an important source of information about the physical state of the tomb and the changes executed in them. Y.D. Sharma- *Delhi and its Neighborhood* and S A. Naqvi- *Humayun's Tomb and Adjacent Buildings* are two Indian works done in early twentieth century. Prints and drawings from this time helped in understanding the condition of the tomb and identifying the changes that were instituted later.

For modern scholarship about the tomb, the bibliography is extensive. Some of the main references are Catherine B. Asher- *Architecture of Mughal India*, Ebba Koch- *Mughal architecture: An Outline of its History and Development (1526-1858)* and D. Fairchild Ruggles- *Humayun's Tomb and Garden: Typologies and Visual Order*, in addition to previously mentioned work by Glen. D. Lowry and Ebba Koch. The trajectory of public perception of the tomb can also be gauged from the print media. Relevant news article and reports have been attached as summarized appendices for reference.

The contrast in the tomb's condition before and after it was enlisted in the 'World Heritage List' in 1993 is not well documented. Recent changes executed in the landscape of the complex were studied through site surveys done by the author during a visit in Summer 2002. This time coincided with the execution of the AKTC project, and the author was able to record its main components. Documentation about the size, architectural and decoration features, use of materials etc. of Humayun's Tomb and its surrounding structures was carried out by the author through field visits during the same time. Interviews of visitors to the tomb and other historic sites like Qutub Minar and Red Fort were carried out as a sample survey to understand contemporary public perception about these places.

**NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Ebba Koch in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, Collected essays (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 170-71.

<sup>2</sup> Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* (1942; reprint Bombay, 1956), p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> These are the words of Tom Kissinger, general manager of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, quoted in Celia W. Dugger, "A Mughal Splendor Regained", *New York Times*, Sep 29 2002, <[http://www.geocities.com/scn\\_pk/other5.html](http://www.geocities.com/scn_pk/other5.html)> (11 June 2003).

<sup>4</sup> For a brief history of Islamic rule in India see Percy brown *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* (1942; reprint Bombay, 1956).

<sup>5</sup> The word *Sultan* means ruler. The first Islamic Empire established in India, with its capital at Delhi, came to be known as the *Delhi Sultanate*.

<sup>6</sup> For more about Babur's rule in India and its impact, see Gavin Hambly, *Cities of Mughul India: Delhi Agra and Fatehpur Sikri* (London: Elek, 1968), pp. 28-38.

<sup>7</sup> Babur is attributed with the inception of the *Chahar Bagh* layout of garden in India during his rule. The Timurid and Indian influence of his designs can be studied in Catherine B. Asher, "Babur and the Timurid Char Bagh," *Environmental Design* No. 1 and 2, pp 46-55, Gavin Hambly, *Cities of Mughul India: Delhi Agra and Fatehpur Sikri* (London: Elek, 1968), pp. 37-38 and E.B. Havell, *Indian architecture: its psychology, structure and history from the first Mohammedan invasion to the present day* (London: J. Murray, 1927), pp. 153-55.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 2 for more about Humayun's rule and exile.

<sup>9</sup> Humayun's wife's original name was not Haji Begum but Bega Begum. She became known as Haji Begum on her return from *Hajj* and is referred to in historic texts with her new name.

<sup>10</sup> Ashoka belonged to the *Maurya* Dynasty, and ruled India during the third century BC. He is credited with uniting India under one of the largest Empires in the history of the country.

<sup>11</sup> The administrative changes made by Akbar, some of which were unprecedented in the Islamic Empire and affected the political and social setup of his empire, are discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>12</sup> Akbar is credited with laying the backbone of Mughal architecture in India through his buildings like Fatehpur Sikri, Humayun's Tomb, Agra Fort etc.

<sup>13</sup> Mughal imperial visits to Delhi (the itinerary included Humayun's Tomb) have been studied in Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*: Collected essays (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 162-174, and is the main reference for this section of the thesis.

<sup>14</sup> Narayani Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires 1803-1931: Society, Government & Urban Growth* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 1-38.

<sup>15</sup> The ASI took responsibility of Humayun's Tomb, among other historic buildings in Delhi, only for three years. At the end of this period in 1884 these buildings went back to the hands of the local city administration. See Chapter 4 for details.

<sup>16</sup> The issue about the authenticity of the garden layout restored by the British in the absence of historic records is discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>17</sup> New British elements were introduced into the landscape of the complex - grassy lawns, sandstone benches and towering palm, cypress and tamarind trees – elements that are not known to have had a Mughal precedent in India.

<sup>18</sup> In Independent India, the *dargah* has become an important cultural and religious center of a shared heritage between Hindus and Muslims, an ambassador for India's secular image. It is the site of weekly and yearly Sufi rituals along with other devotional activities.

<sup>19</sup> See <<http://whc.unesco.org/nwhc/pages/home/pages/homepage.html>> (5 June, 2003)

<sup>20</sup> *Aga Khan Trust for Culture; Historic Cities Support Program*, <[http://www.akdn.org/agency/aktc\\_humayun.html](http://www.akdn.org/agency/aktc_humayun.html)> (5 June, 2003)

<sup>21</sup> Bart Verschaffel, "The Monumental: on the meaning of form," *The Journal of Architecture*, Volume 4 (Routledge: Winter 1999), p. 334.

<sup>22</sup> See Mark Wigley, "The Architectural Cult of Synchronization," *The Journal of Architecture*, Volume 4 (Routledge: Winter 1999), pp. 412-15.

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion about the various values that have been ascribed to monuments, their function and perception see Alois Riegl, '*Der Moderne Denkmalkultus*'. Trans. Kurt W. Forster & Diane Ghirardo, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its character and Origin", *Oppositions* 25, 1982.

<sup>24</sup> Bart Verschaffel, "The Monumental: Meaning of a form," *The Journal of Architecture*, Volume 4 (Routledge: Winter 1999), pp. 334-36.

<sup>25</sup> Hayden V. White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. ix-x.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-25.

<sup>27</sup> See Brigitte Desrochers, "Ruins revisited: modernist conceptions of heritage," *The Journal of Architecture*, Volume 5 (Routledge: Spring 2000), pp. 41-43 and Alois Riegl, '*Der Moderne Denkmalkultus*'. Trans. Kurt W. Forster & Diane Ghirardo, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its character and Origin", *Oppositions* 25, 1982.

<sup>28</sup> For iconoclasm and its projection in context of Islam, with respect to the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha's, see Gwendolyn Wright, "Building Global Modernisms", *Grey Room* 07 (Spring 2002), pp. 124-134.

<sup>29</sup> The Qutub has been used to highlight the iconoclastic aspects of Islamic rulers and builders. See Sunil Kumar, "Qutub and Modern Memory", *The Present in Delhi's Pasts* (New Delhi: Three Essays Press, 2002), pp. 1-61.





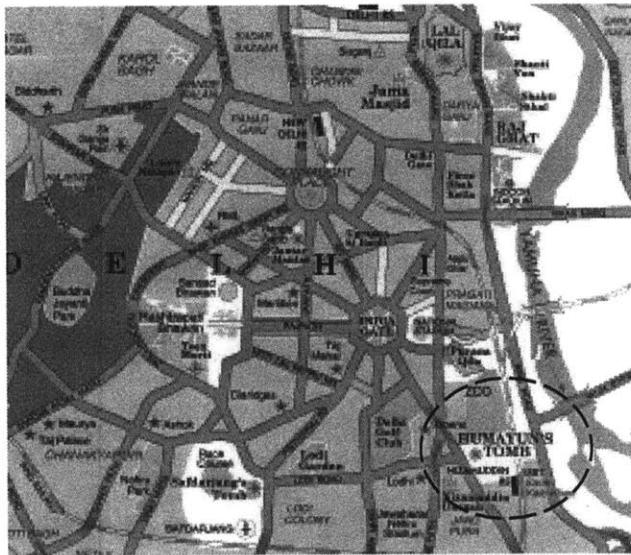
## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Context of the Narrative**

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This chapter documents Humayun's Tomb Complex- its site, immediate surroundings and neighboring structures. The first section identifies the salient points of the physical and symbolic relation of these surroundings to the tomb, with a focus on Din Panah and Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah*. It also identifies how these surroundings lent to the construction of a political, spiritual and architectural context that operated around the site even before the tomb was built. The tomb exists as part of a large complex containing numerous subsidiary buildings, most of which were built during the sixteenth century, and have been described in the last section. The formal aspects of the tomb's architecture and its symbolic content are identified in the next chapter. Together, these two chapters identify and explain the meanings the tomb became associated with in the period immediately following its construction.

Fig.4. Map of contemporary New Delhi showing the location of Humayun's Tomb with respect to the urban surroundings, Red Fort (Lal Qila), River Yamuna and Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah*.



## 2.1 CONTEMPORARY LOCATION OF THE TOMB AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Humayun's Tomb Complex is located near the banks of River Yamuna that flows to its east. At the time of its construction, the river used to flow right next to the site. The tomb was once accessible by boat,<sup>1</sup> but over the years the river has shrunk and now flows at some distance. The river was also diverted eastward during early twentieth century, for the construction of railway tracks that pass along the tomb's eastern wall.<sup>2</sup> The ruins of Humayun's city Din Panah lie to the north of the tomb, while the *dargah* and settlement of Nizamuddin Auliya lie to its west. The south side of the complex is bounded by housing development that came up during the twentieth century. Several historic Sultanate and Mughal buildings and new urban residential/commercial setups dot the immediate surroundings. A relatively uninhabited and desolate area of sixteenth century Mughal Delhi, the area around the tomb today is within the urban sprawl of late twentieth century New Delhi (the urban surroundings and important structures near the site have been marked in Fig.4).

### 2.1.1 THE RUINS OF DIN PANAH

Humayun ascended to the throne of Delhi as the second Mughal emperor in India after the death of his father, Babur, in 1530. Babur had ruled for only 4 years after establishing the Mughal dynasty in India.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the empire that he bequeathed was not yet stable and the first half of Humayun's reign was wrought with continuous strife with provincial governors. Principal among these was Sher Shah Sur, the de facto ruler of Bihar. Although Sher Shah continued to read the *khutba* (sermon) in the name of the Mughal emperor<sup>4</sup>, he had started extending his political influence by making incursions into the empire.<sup>5</sup> The two rivals met in battle at Chausa in 1539 where Humayun was forced to beat a hasty retreat. Sher Shah soon advanced on to Agra, the seat of the Mughal Empire. He fought Humayun again at Kanauj in 1540, where the Mughals were completely routed. Humayun was forced to flee the country and he spent the next fifteen years in exile. Most of that time was spent at the Persian court.<sup>6</sup> He returned to power in 1555, recovered his territory and re-established the Mughal Empire.<sup>7</sup> Din Panah was the only major architectural project undertaken by Humayun during his discontinuous reign; the political turmoil that marked his reign is reflected to a certain extent in the debate about the city he built.

The word Din Panah literally means '*asylum of religion*'. The construction of the city was begun in 1533 by Humayun and within a year most of it had been completed<sup>8</sup> (Fig.5 and 6). Its architecture can be designated as the confluence of parallel themes—a continuation of the existing Sultanate building tradition and a search for representing the newly emerging Mughal identity. However, the city soon became uninhabited and as a result fell into disrepair and ruin.<sup>9</sup> This prevented it from becoming a lasting symbol of Mughal presence in the city of Delhi. The desolation of Din Panah can be attributed to two main factors, the first of which is Humayun's discontinuous reign that witnessed an unstable empire and his eventual exile from it. The second factor



Fig. 5. The enclosure walls and gate of Din Panah from outside. The walls are surrounded by a moat. The ruins of the city have been used to house the Delhi Zoo.

Fig. 6. The crumbling civic structures within Din Panah.



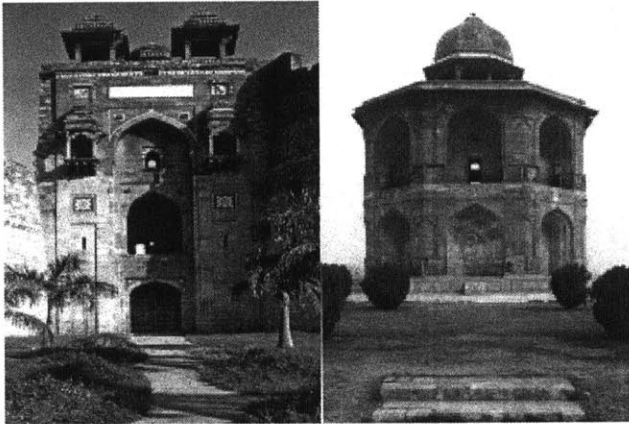
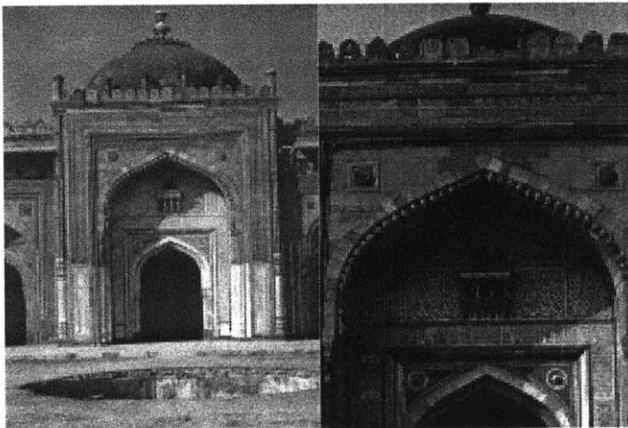


Fig. 7. (Left) one of the gateways to Din Panah.

Fig. 8. (Right) Sher Mandal (octagonal pavilion in Din Panah that served as Humayun's Library, from which he fell to his death.)

Fig. 9. (left) Qala-i-Kuhna Mosque in Din Panah.

Fig. 10. (right) Details of the ornamentation on the mosque.



was the move of the Mughal capital from Delhi to Agra during Akbar's reign,<sup>10</sup> which moved the seat of government and the Mughal court away from Din panah, leaving it uninhabited within three decades of being built.

The city is almost rectangular in layout and its enclosure walls are built of rubble (Fig.5). Its double storied gateways are made of red sandstone and are surmounted by small *chattris* (kiosks). The complex housed a variety of civic and administrative buildings, few of which remain (Fig.6). The city survives through its outer walls, gates (Fig.7), Sher Mandal and Qala-i-Kunha Mosque. The mosque is made of rubble and faced with red sandstone, gray quartzite and white marble. Its façade, like Humayun's Tomb, is decorated with a series of inlaid stone panels with geometric patterns (Fig.9 and 10). *Quranic* inscriptions run along the edges of the archways. Similarly, the Sher Mandal is built of rubble, faced with red sandstone and ornamented in part with glazed tiles, incised plasterwork and inlaid stone patterns (Fig.8).

Details about the history of Din Panah remain unconfirmed and hence a matter of debate. Inscriptions and written sources confirm that Humayun began the city in 1533 and work progressed rapidly.<sup>11</sup> However, there is no historically recorded fact confirming who completed construction of the city. There are various accounts about the city- some maintain that Humayun did not build it while others claim that Sher Shah destroyed it upon ousting him and rebuilt it entirely. In terms of the existing architectural and historical evidence, it seems most likely that Sher Shah simply continued the work on the city begun by Humayun and built an inner citadel to the city referred to in historic texts as Purana Quila.<sup>12</sup> Due to the debate about the city itself, patronage of the two best-preserved and architecturally significant structures in the complex also remains contested - the Sher Mandal and the Qala-i-Kunha Mosque.

The ASI maintains that Sher Shah built both these structures after he ousted Humayun.<sup>13</sup> However, the overriding architectural resemblance of these structures to Humayun's Tomb cannot be overlooked – that they are two of the earliest examples of Mughal architecture in India is beyond debate. This argument is substantiated by the ornamentation detail of the mosque and pavilion- the extensive use of red sandstone with inlaid geometric patterns and use of lotus and six-pointed star motifs that are found in Humayun's Tomb. Together these two structures exhibit rudiments of architectural features that are the hallmark of Humayun's Tomb built later.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.1.2 DARGAH <sup>15</sup> AND SETTLEMENT OF NIZAMUDDIN

While Din Panah formed the political and architectural context, the *dargah* of Nizamuddin Auliya is significant as the source of religious and spiritual associations of the site of Humayun's Tomb (Fig.11). The historic village settlement of Nizamuddin is situated about two kilometers south of Din Panah, 500 meters from Humayun's Tomb (see Fig.4). It is named after the *sufi*<sup>16</sup> Nizamuddin Auliya, born in 1236, who lived in Delhi. He had been a popular *sufi* during his lifetime.<sup>17</sup> There are numerous legends associated with his life and powers as a *sufi*.<sup>18</sup> After his death in 1325, his popularity increased manifold, to be instituted in a system of devotional rituals and prayers that took place at his *dargah*. The constant crowd of devotees that throng his *dargah* today is evidence of his continuing popularity (Fig.12). However, it must be pointed out that his original tomb does not exist anymore. The present day structure is the result of work undertaken by Faridun Khan, a nobleman and devotee, who executed the building during Akbar's reign in 1562-63.<sup>19</sup>

The *dargah* is part of a complex that comprises of Nizamuddin Auliya's Tomb as its focus along with a *madrasa* (school for religious learning), a *baoli* (stepped well), subsidiary structures for devotional activities and a number of royal graves. The use



Fig. 11. The dargah of Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya.

Fig. 12. Devotees at Nizamuddin Auliya s Dargah.

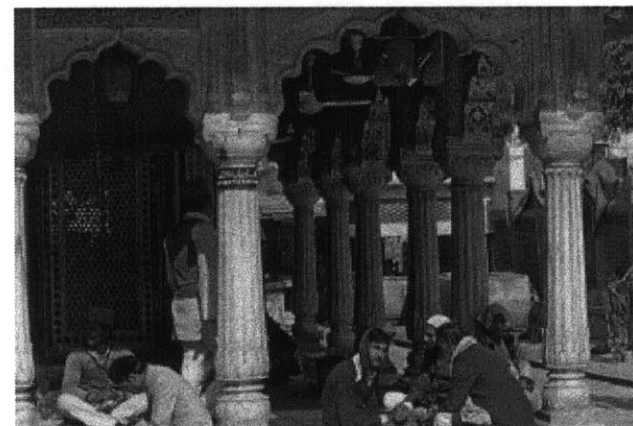




Fig.13. Stalls selling objects used as offering at the dargah like flowers etc. The settlement around the dargah is teeming with residents and devotees.

Fig.14. Royal Mughal graves within the dargah.



of the *dargah* as a popular site for royal burials during the seventeenth century instead of Humayun's Tomb, and its significance is discussed in Chapter 3. Until the twentieth century, the settlement around the *dargah*, located outside the urban expanse of Delhi was a relatively isolated place. With the onset of urbanization, the settlement rapidly expanded in size and has since become integrated with the urban fabric of the city through residential and commercial activities. Today, the area exists as a vibrant settlement, teeming with people and activity (Fig.13). The development of the settlement with the *dargah* as its point of focus forms a complete study by itself that has not been dealt with here.<sup>20</sup> In subsequent chapters its functional and spiritual connection to Humayun's Tomb is revealed, highlighting a strong but short lived symbolic association between the two during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

There are numerous structures, both within and in the immediate vicinity of the *dargah* that hold architectural and historic significance like the octagonal tomb of Khan-i-Jahan Tilangani and the Kalan Masjid from Firuz Shah's period (fourteenth century).<sup>21</sup> His successors also added a number of buildings to the *dargah*. The tombs from the Sultanate era located in the immediate vicinity of the *dargah* are a reflection of the sanctity accorded to the site – they drew *barakat*<sup>22</sup> from the *dargah* through physical proximity with it. Hence, the *dargah* and the area around it had already existed as the focus of the saint's devotional cult and a popular spiritual refuge since the fourteenth century, much before the construction of Humayun's Tomb near it.

The spiritual import of the *dargah* stepped up significantly under Akbar's reign, who was a *Sufi* disciple himself and revered Nizamuddin Auliya among other *Chishti* saints.<sup>23</sup> The manifestation of his devotion as it relates to the development of a spiritual context for Humayun's Tomb, its perception and use during the Mughal era especially under Akbar's reign, is discussed in Chapter 3. Some later Mughals also were devotees



of the *sufi* and they maintained a spiritual association with the *dargah*. They added screens and undertook massive repair and restoration work there<sup>24</sup>. Though Humayun's Tomb was built as a dynastic burial place, later a number of Mughal nobility were buried near the *dargah* area- Mirza Muqim (1559), Atgah Khan (1566), Janahanara (1681), Muhammad Shah (1748), Mirza Jahangir (1821) and many others (Fig.14). These burials accorded a dynastic status to the *dargah* during the eighteenth century, in addition to its already established spiritual importance.

Nizamuddin Auliya's following and popularity gradually increased, due to the rise in the popularity of *Sufism* as a bridge between Hindu and Muslim populations during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>25</sup> This aspect attracted Akbar; at an individual level, he found it interesting to explore *Sufism* in the context of his religious beliefs. At the political level, it made sense for him to ally himself with the *dargah* and its activities. In doing so, he was able to draw from the saint's popularity to further his own political and spiritual agenda.

### 2.1.3 OTHER SURROUNDING STRUCTURES (Fig.15)

The octagonal Tomb of isa Khan is one of the main buildings in the area, located within Humayun's Tomb Complex (Fig.16). It is built of local gray quartzite and ornamented with red sandstone. The Persian inscription over the *mihrab* in the tomb gives the following details- it was built in the *Hijra* year 954 (AD 1547-48) by the son of the chief chamberlain during the reign of Islam Shah (son of Sher Shah).

The structure locally designated as Arab Sarai, meaning '*Arab shelter*', is also part of the complex - it lies to the south of Humayun's Tomb, just outside the main enclosure walls (Fig.17). It comprises of a courtyard with a series of vaulted cells, and in the center of this structure is a small *baoli* and *hamam* (bath). The original purpose of the

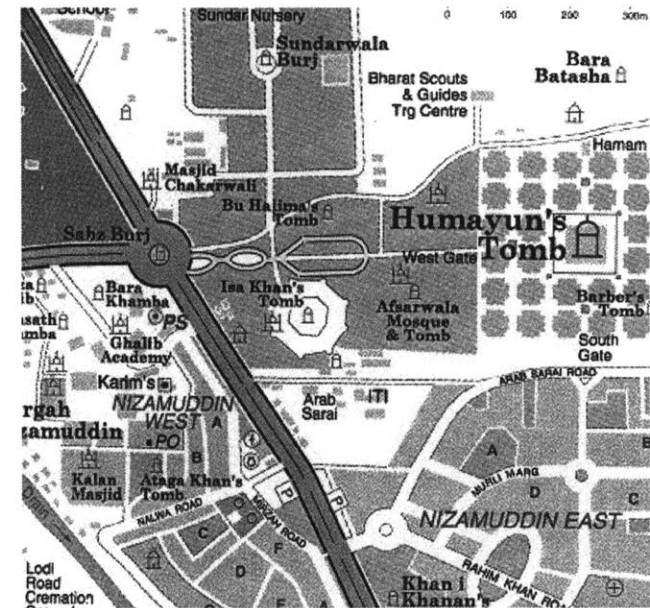


Fig.15. Map of area around Humayun s Tomb showing its contemporary urban surroundings with other historic structures.

Fig.16. Tomb of Isa Khan located in Humayun s Tomb Complex.

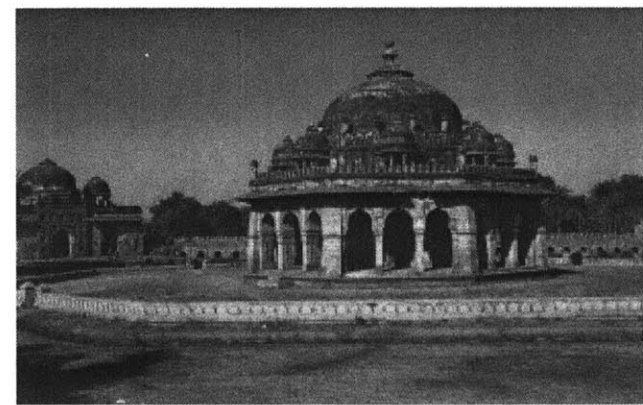




Fig.17. Ruins of the Arab Sarai.

Fig.18. Tomb of Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan.

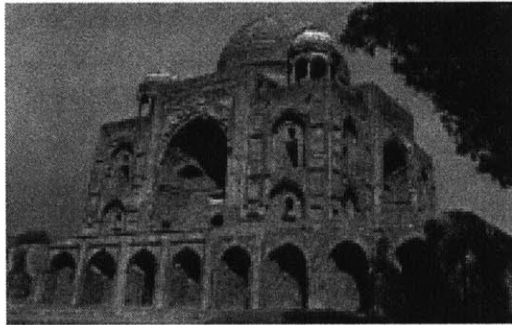
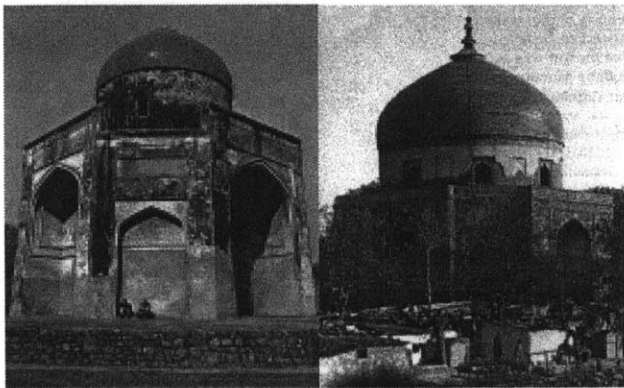


Fig. 19. (left) Sabz Burj. Fig.20. (right) Nila Gumbad.



building has remained an issue of debate. Some historians believe that Haji Begum built this structure in 1560 to house the three hundred priests who accompanied her from Mecca on her return from *Haji*. However, it has also been proposed that the structure housed workmen from Persia who were building Humayun's Tomb.<sup>26</sup> There are no records that ascertain the accuracy of either of these claims.

Other surrounding structures of significance are the *Bara Batashewala Mahal* (1603) and the mausoleum of Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan (1626) (Fig.18). The Lakkharwala Gumbad and Sundarwala Mahal are rubble structures attributed to the sixteenth century that lie in ruins today. The *Sabz Burj*, *Nila Gumbad*,<sup>27</sup> both adorned with colored tiles (Fig.19 and 20) and Afsarwala Gumbad (Fig.21) date to the last part of the sixteenth century. The following mosques in the immediate vicinity of Humayun's Tomb also date from the same time - the rubble Khair-ul-Manzil (1561), the mosque attached to the Tomb of Isa Khan- rubble faced with red and gray stone (Fig.22) and the mosque attached to the Afsarwala Tomb (rubble faced with plaster and painted).<sup>28</sup>

At the time of construction of Humayun's Tomb, the area around was uninhabited except for the *dargah* of Nizamuddin Auliya. This desolation was compounded by the preponderance of tombs and a few scattered mosques mentioned above. The *barakat* associated with the *dargah* had made the area a favored spot for building tombs. The tombs range from various dates, mostly built during the later sixteenth - early seventeenth centuries. The image of desolation is conveyed by Bishop Heber's account of the area when he was passing through in 1824.

*From the gate of Agra to Humayun's Tomb a very awful scene of desolation, ruins after ruins, tombs after tombs, fragment of brick work, granite and marble scattered everywhere over a soil naturally rocky and barren, without cultivation except in one or two spots, without a single tree.*<sup>29</sup>



The city of Shahjahanabad was built much later and it was located far from the tomb. With its completion, the locus of Mughal building activity and habitation moved to that site. The center of British building activity in the first quarter of the twentieth century was focused around the Capitol at Raisina hills, constructed in 1911.

## 2.2 HUMAYUN'S TOMB COMPLEX (Fig.24)

The site of the complex was a flat stretch of land bounded by River Yamuna on one side (allowing for ease of irrigation of the garden) and Isa Khan's tomb and mosque on the other. The enclosure walls of the complex abutted Nizamuddin Auliya's Chilla Khana.<sup>30</sup> The location of the site was determined as a function of proximity to Nizamuddin Auliya's dargah and Din Panah, both of which were significant in setting up a political and spiritual context at the site as discussed in this chapter.

Humayun's Tomb is the primary building in a large walled complex that includes many structures – not all of which were built at the same time as the tomb. Some of them predate the tomb slightly; Isa Khan's mosque and tomb and the Arab Sarai were built in the sixteenth century but before Humayun's Tomb. Structures in the complex relevant to this study are the two entrance gateways, the enclosure wall and some pavilions (Fig.24). All these structures are integral to the complex, contributing to the overall functioning of the tomb complex in one way or another. Detailed accounts of their architecture and histories have been avoided; discussion about them in the following section is limited to their relation with the tomb.

### 2.2.1 THE GATES

Humayun's Tomb stands on a high plinth, in the middle of a garden setting, enclosed by a rubble wall and accessed through two monumental gates- one in the center of the southern wall and the other in the center of the western wall (Fig. 24). Both these

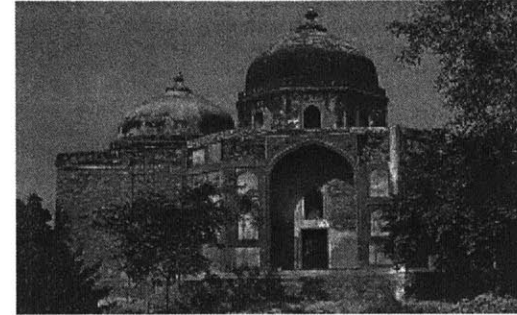


Fig.21. Afsarwala Gumbad.

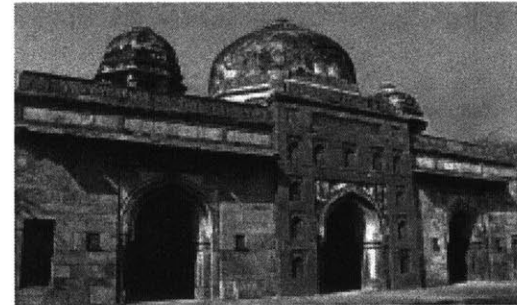


Fig.22. Mosque attached to the Tomb of Isa Khan.

Fig.23. Western Gateway and main entrance to the complex.

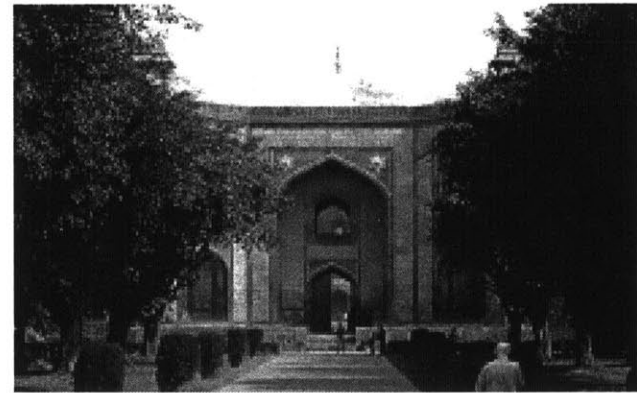
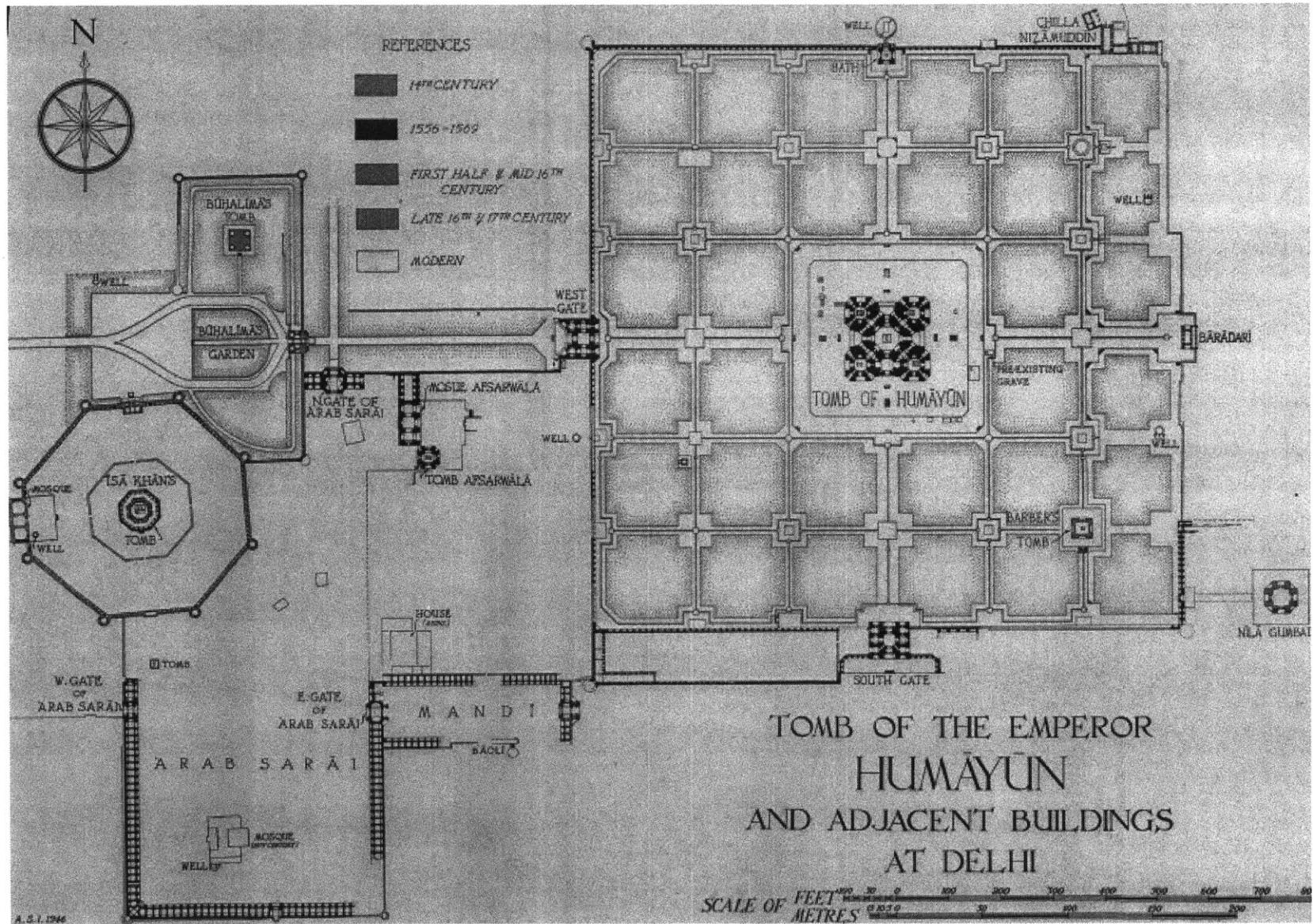


Fig.24. Plan of Humayun's Tomb Complex as it existed in 1942 after the restoration of its gardens and subsidiary structures by the ASI. The plan was commissioned by the ASI and Drawn by S.A.A. Naqvi.



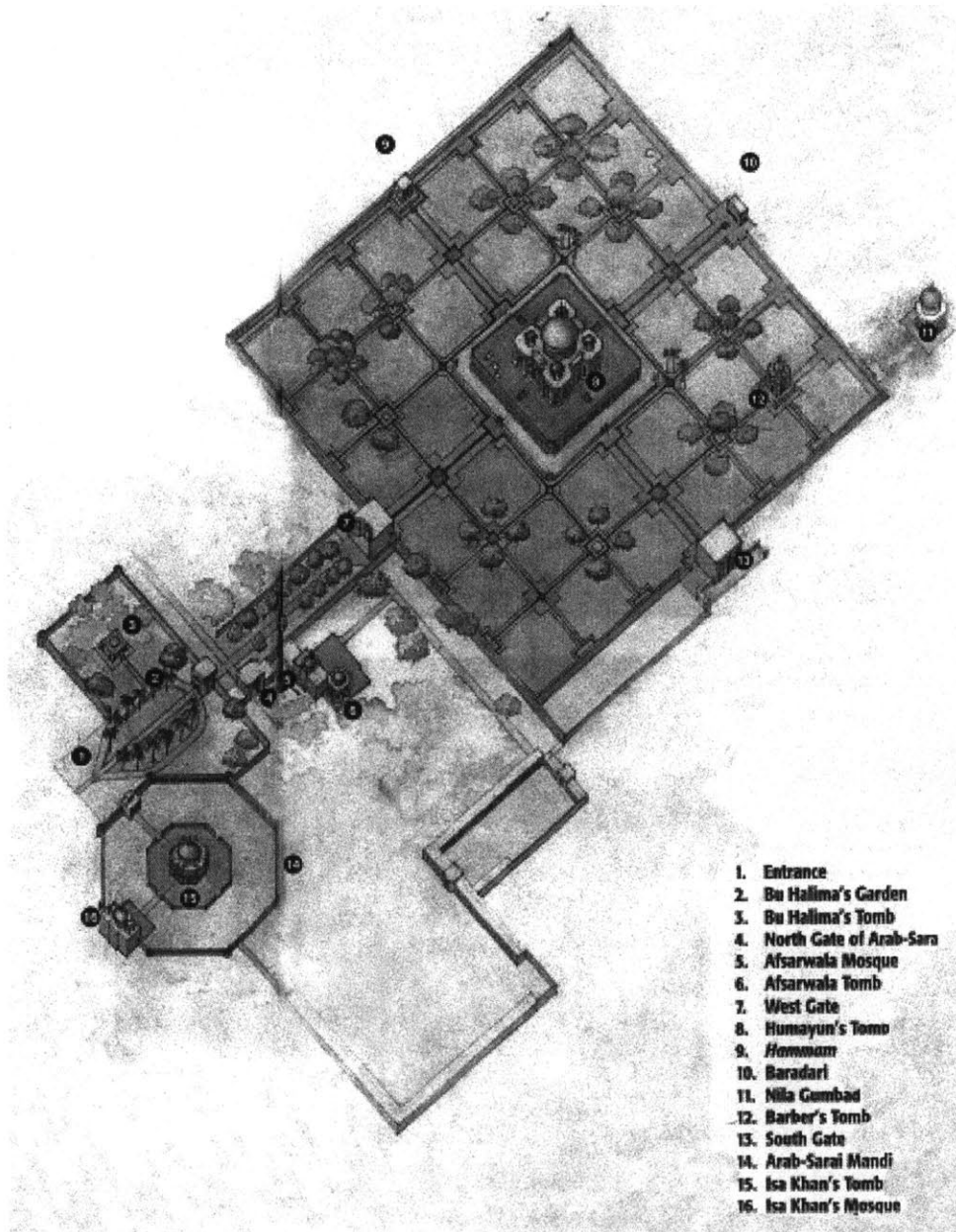
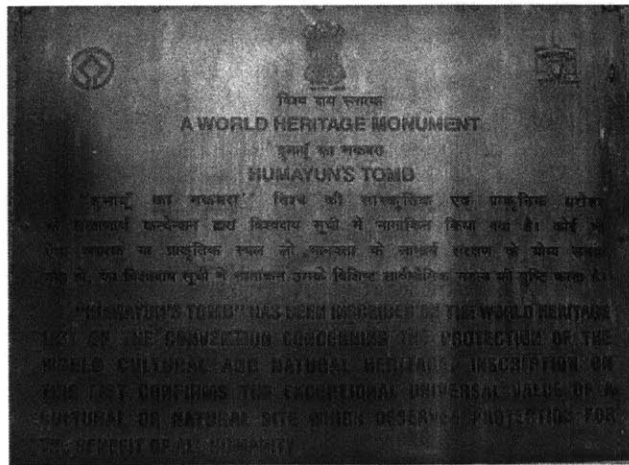


Fig.25. Axonometric sketch of Humayun's Tomb Complex showing the tomb in its garden setting. It shows details of the garden layout, the main axial approach to the complex as it exists today along with all the existing subsidiary structures within the complex.



Fig.26. The garden of Bu Halima.

Fig.27. The shield declaring Humayun's Tomb a World Heritage Monument and its inscription by the World Heritage Committee.



gates are made of rubble, faced with locally available grey granite and adorned by a border of red sandstone with white marble inlays along the edges. The western gate is used as the main entrance for the complex today, feeding off the access road adjacent to Nizamuddin<sup>31</sup>(Fig.4). However, this was not the original main entrance - the southern gate had been designed as the royal entry and it had continued to be so for almost four centuries. It has been proposed that the barapula (a bridge that existed almost directly south of the southern gate) formed part of the original access way to the tomb.<sup>32</sup> Although there is no remaining physical evidence of this (the construction of a housing development on that site changed the earlier landscape completely), the claim is substantiated by the fact that the southern gate is larger and axially aligned with the entrance of the tomb chamber in keeping with the overall symmetry of the design. The current main entrance to the complex was created through the western gate after the southern one was closed by the ASI in 1916.<sup>33</sup>

The tomb and mosque of Isa Khan are located to the right of the pathway, bounded by a separate enclosure wall. The gate to Humayun's Tomb is preceded by a walk through the garden of Bu Halima (Fig.26). Nothing is known about her and the origin of the garden locally named after her, but architecturally the enclosure walls and the gateway of the garden belong to the early Mughal period in the sixteenth century. The garden is enclosed by rubble walls of grey quartzite. Its western gateway forms the current entrance to Humayun's Tomb Complex as the visitor's Ticket Office. The eastern gateway is a simple structure consisting of an oblong main gate chamber with octagonal wings- forming the entrance leading up to the gate of Humayun's Tomb. The main walkway is paved with red sandstone. Just before the gate is a stone pedestal faced with a rusted metal shield that announces the building as a 'World Heritage Monument' (Fig.27). The pedestal was installed following the tomb's nomination to the UNESCO "World Heitage List" list in 1993.



The gate to the garden is composed of a central arch flanked on either side by arched niches. The central arch has a door that leads into the gate comprised of a square room that feeds off into chambers on either side.<sup>34</sup> A large dome covers the room and *chhatris* flank the top of the gate. The door in the center of the eastern wall of the room forms the entry to the tomb garden. The entrance, main gate and all pathways leading from it are aligned along a central axis with the tomb itself. The southern gate is similar in architectural details and layout to the western one, though not identical (there are a few minor differences). The primary difference is that the central walkway from the southern gate is aligned axially with the entry to the tomb chamber unlike the western gate.

### 2.2.2 THE ENCLOSURE WALLS

The complex is bounded by a rubble wall. Narrow arched cells line the interior of the walls. The wall was falling in places when the complex was claimed by the ASI, and sections of it have been repaired at different times. However, they have been retained in the manner of their original construction except for the southern wall- the western end of which has been altered to form a nursery by extending the wall. This nursery is used by the ASI to replenish the plants in the landscape of the complex. This change was instituted when the southern entry to the complex was sealed off in 1916 and the western gate made the main point of access.<sup>35</sup>

### 2.2.3 THE GARDEN

The garden around the tomb is approximately three hundred and fifty square meters in size. It is cross axially divided into four main sections by a series of water channels bounded by pathways, punctuated at regular intervals by small pools and fountains, located at the intersection of the channels- all made of red sandstone. Together, they divide the garden symmetrically into 36 parts (Fig.28). The water for the channels was

Fig.28. Chahar Bagh layout of the garden with its system of axially aligned water channels bounded by pathways on both sides.



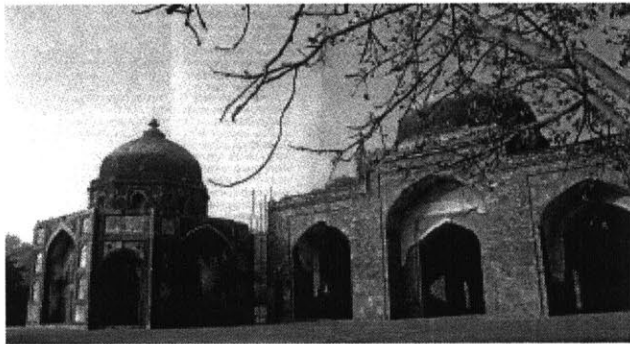
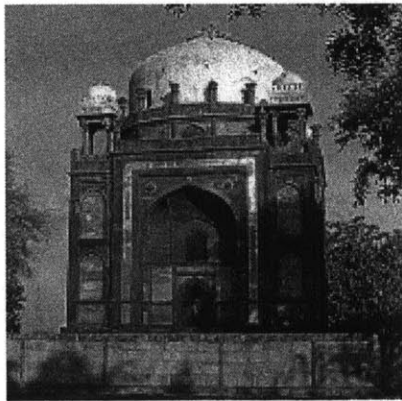


Fig.29. Afsarwala Mosque and Tomb.

Fig.30. Nai ka Gumbad.



originally supplied through four wells located within the complex till the nineteenth century, when they ceased to function due to neglect and disrepair. When the ASI took over and instituted renovation of the gardens in early twentieth century, the water supply for the complex was integrated into the city's water system.<sup>36</sup> The current landscape of the garden has been a cause of much academic debate due to the fact that its restoration by the ASI in 1916 was executed in the absence of historic records about the original layout details of the garden.

### 2.3 SUBSIDIARY STRUCTURES IN THE COMPLEX

Humayun's Tomb Complex contains many subsidiary structures, some of which are significant - a small mosque, an unidentified tomb, a pavilion, a series of rooms and a pavilion. These have been briefly discussed next.

#### 2.3.1 AFSARWALA MOSQUE

The mosque is a simple and bare structure that consists of a rectangular platform made of grey quartzite and topped by a qibla<sup>37</sup> wall composed of a central niche flanked by two smaller openings on either side. There is a white gravestone at the corner of the platform that does not bear any inscription indicating the name of the person buried there or the date of its construction. The building is attributed to the second or third quarter of the sixteenth century, and the lack of any historic record about it makes it impossible to ascertain these facts. The mosque is locally named *Afsarwala* meaning 'officer', and the adjoining tomb goes by the same name (Fig.29).

#### 2.3.2 NAI KA GUMBAD (TOMB OF THE BARBER)

This a rubble structure, faced with red sandstone and grey granite, resting on a low square plinth. It consists of a square compartment capped by a large double dome (Fig.30). The corners of the roof are marked by *chhatris*. The decoration is similar to

Humayun's Tomb, especially the octagonal colonettes. The tomb has a central chamber containing two graves marked by Quranic inscriptions, but no names. One of the graves bears a late sixteenth century date (1590-91) for the construction of the tomb, consistent with its architectural similarities to Humayun's and Isa Khan's tomb. The absence of a name in historic records has been overshadowed by local legend that the tomb is of Akbar's favourite barber.<sup>38</sup>

### 2.3.3 BARADARI (THE EASTERN PAVILION)

Made of rubble and faced with plaster, the pavilion consists of five openings that provide access to the structure. The interior consists of a room and a balcony running along one side of the building overlooking the river. The building has been through extensive repairs, most of which have been executed in brick and are easily distinguished. ASI records about the structure are not detailed. Lowry proposed a mid-seventeenth century date for the structure based on its poly-lobed arches and niches, claiming that this feature was not known to Shahjahan and is a popular feature of later construction.<sup>39</sup> The structure was not important for either the functioning or the setup of Humayun's Tomb, clearly being a later addition. Today, most of the lighting for the tomb, which makes it visible on the skyline of Delhi at night, is installed on this structure (Fig.31).

### 2.3.4 CHILLA NIZAMUDDIN AULIYA (THE NORTH EASTERN ROOMS)

The ruins of a series of rooms are located at the eastern corner of the northern enclosure wall of the complex. They were made of rubble, covered in plaster and built into the enclosure wall. The large number of rooms can be organised into four groups. The western group contains a rectangular hall that abuts the Chilla Khana of Nizamuddin. These rooms are significant as their presence is evidence of the connection between the tomb's activities and the *Chilla Khana*.<sup>40</sup> The rooms, none of



Fig.31. Baradari mounted with floodlights for the tomb.

which are inscribed with a construction date, by virtue of their presence in the enclosure walls, are probably of the time of the tomb's construction. This fact is supported by the similarity of their pillars to the octagonal colonettes of Humayun's Tomb.

### 2.3.5 HAMAM (THE BATH/WELL HOUSE)

This pavilion is located in the middle of the northern wall, aligned with a water channel down the northern pathway of the garden. The plinth is low, made of grey quartzite and adorned with niches made in red sandstone. Its plinth also has a small opening on its southern face that once allowed water to flow from the plinth's surface and feed the garden's water channels. The pavilion at the rear end of the plinth, made of rubble and faced with plaster consists of a single square room, capped by a large dome. Under the dome is an octagonal pool, fed by water through an opening in the northern wall of the pavilion. The pavilion served the function of a *hamam* (royal bath). The well behind the pavilion was the source of water for the bath. The pool, the plinth and the water channel are axially aligned as a unified system for water supply to the garden and water channels.

There is a well behind the pavilion, built of several meters thick stone masonry. A complex system of canals feed off the well, pass under the pavilion and connect the water channels of the garden. This well and its canals were one of the main sources of water for the garden, since this well is the largest of the four in the complex and its system of canals is the widest. The material, layout and design of this pavilion, in addition to its functional necessity, confirm that it was part of the original layout of the complex. This is further reinforced by the fact that those parts of the pavilion that abut the enclosure wall are integral to the structure and could not have been added at a later stage.



#### 2.4 THE POLITICAL, SPIRITUAL AND ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The city of *Din Panah* was not simply Humayun's architectural mark but also charged the tomb with political significance as a symbol of Mughal conquest on Delhi's map. The proximity of Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* lent increased spiritual significance to the site, especially in light of Akbar's devotion. The political and spiritual significance of the site was also reinforced by the presence of the large number of burial structures that had been built in that area during the sixteenth century. These structures, along with the *dargah*, set the architectural, political and spiritual context for Humayun's Tomb.

Though these buildings existing in the vicinity of the tomb were numerous- they were by no means monumental in scale or significance. Hence, it can be concluded that Humayun's Tomb had a two way relationship with its surrounding structures - on one hand, the choice of site for the tomb was partly directed by their presence as they contributed meaning and a higher degree of sanctity to the site. On the other hand, once the tomb was built, it in turn contributed to the overall significance of the area through its monumental size and symbolic associations. How the tomb subsequently overtook Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* and all other structures in signification and became firmly established in popular imagination as the locus of numerous architectural, political and spiritual associations, redefining them through its presence during late sixteenth - early seventeenth century is discussed in the next chapter.

**NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> "From there he (Akbar) went by boat to the tomb of *Jannat Ashiyani*". Abu'l Fazl quoted in Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> *Annual report: Northern Circle, Superintendent of Muhammedan and British Monuments*, 1917, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> For a brief history of Babur's life before and during his reign in India, see Gavin Hambly, *Cities of Mughul India: Delhi Agra and Fatehpur Sikri* (London: Elek, 1968), pp. 28-38.

<sup>4</sup> 'reading the *khutba*' refers to the practice of having a delegation of religious men read a sermon. It is an act by which, according to Islamic practice, a ruler formally assumed sovereignty. When this was done in the name of another emperor, it was to indicate a submission to that ruler.

<sup>5</sup> For more on Sher Shah's rule and architecture see Gavin Hambly, *Cities of Mughul India: Delhi Agra and Fatehpur Sikri* (London: Elek, 1968), pp. 39-40 and Swati Mitra (ed.) *Humayun's Tomb and Adjacent Monuments*, World Heritage Series (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2002), pp. 18-19.

<sup>6</sup> For details about the time Humayun spent in exile, especially his years in the Persian court, see *Akbarnama*, I, Trans., Sukumar Ray, *Humayun in Persia* (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1948).

<sup>7</sup> Gavin Hambly, *Cities of Mughul India: Delhi Agra and Fatehpur Sikri* (London: Elek, 1968), pp. 39-40.

<sup>8</sup> Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain- I -Akbari*, Quoted by Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> The capital of the Mughal Empire was moved back to Agra, as it had been in Babur's time, who in turn had been following an earlier established Lodi precedent. The reasons for the relocation of the capital under Akbar's reign were mostly strategic.

<sup>11</sup> Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 21-22.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion about the debate surrounding the existence and construction of the two cities Din Panah and Purana Quila and their attributed patronage see Swati Mitra (ed.) *Humayun's Tomb and Adjacent Monuments*, World Heritage Series (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2002), pp. 16-23. The historic evidence for Humayun's Din Panah and Sher Shah's Purana Quila as being situated on the same site is confirmed by Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982) pp. 22-26.

<sup>13</sup> Swati Mitra (ed.) *Humayun's Tomb & Adjacent Monuments*, World Heritage Series (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2002), p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> The architectural and decorative features that link Humayun's tomb to these two structures, proving their Mughal provenance have been discussed in Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 22-26.

<sup>15</sup> 'Dargah' refers to the tomb of a person attributed with spiritual or religious powers like a *sufi*. It is in the form of a shrine, where devotees can perform pilgrimage and devotional prayers.

<sup>16</sup> 'Sufi' refers to Islamic mystics. They were popular religious and spiritual figures, with devotees from political rulers to the common man. Their tombs often developed into significant shrines for devotional activities and pilgrimage.

<sup>17</sup> For an introduction to Nizamuddin Auliya and *Sufism* in India see Bruce B. Lawrence, "The Earliest Chishtiya and Shaikh Nizamuddin Awliya" and Simon Digby, "Tabarrukat and Succession among the Great Chishti Shaykhs of the Delhi Sultanate", in Frykenberg (ed.) *Delhi through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 63-128.

<sup>18</sup> A famous legend is from the time when the first Tughluq king, Ghiyasuddin was constructing his fortress and had prohibited his workers from working for Nizamuddin, who was constructing a *baoli* (stepped well) at the same time. The workers began to work for the sheikh at night and the angry ruler banned the sale of oil to the saint. The saint performed a miracle so that the workers could light their lamps with the *baoli* water.

<sup>19</sup> Swati Mitra (ed.) *Humayun's Tomb & Adjacent Monuments*, World Heritage Series (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2002), p. 83.

<sup>20</sup> For details about the development of the settlement around the dargah, see Zafar Hasan, *A Guide to Nizamuddin, Memoir of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 10 (Calcutta, 1922) and Bruce B. Lawrence, "The Earliest Chishtiya and Shaikh Nizamuddin Awliya" in Frykenberg (ed.) *Delhi through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 104-28.

<sup>21</sup> S. A. A. Naqvi, *Humayun's Tomb and adjacent buildings*, (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1947), pp. 23-24.

<sup>22</sup> 'Barakat' means spiritual charisma and power. The importance accorded to the tombs of *sufi-saints* was the central theme of Indo-Muslim piety. It was believed that the barakat of the saint persisted in his tomb, to which those who required his intercession would resort. It could also be bestowed upon a person by burying them in close proximity to the tomb of the saint.

<sup>23</sup> The *Chishti* order of saints and Nizamuddin Auliya's role among them have been discussed in Bruce B. Lawrence, "The Earliest Chishtiya and Shaikh Nizamuddin Awliya" in Frykenberg (ed.) *Delhi through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 104-28.

<sup>24</sup> Zafar Hasan, *A Guide to Nizamuddin, Memoir of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 10 (Calcutta, 1922).

<sup>25</sup> For the growing popularity of *Sufism*, see Simon Digby, "Tabarrukat and Succession among the Great Chishti Shaykhs of the Delhi Sultanate", in Frykenberg (ed.) *Delhi through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 63-103.

<sup>26</sup> Swati Mitra (ed.) *Humayun's Tomb and Adjacent Monuments*, World Heritage Series (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2002), pp. 66-67 and S. A. A. Naqvi, *Humayun's Tomb and*

*adjacent buildings*, (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1947), pp. 18-19.

<sup>27</sup> The names '*Nila Gumbad*' and '*Sabz Burj*' refer to the color of the domes on these two structures that were covered in ornamental colored tiles at the time they were built. The real names of the people buried within these two structures is still a matter of debate, and these names remain prevalent both locally and scholastically.

<sup>28</sup> For details about the individual structures, their architecture and history see Swati Mitra (ed.) *Humayun's Tomb and Adjacent Monuments*, World Heritage Series (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2002), pp. 81-84.

<sup>29</sup> Heber, *Bishop Heber in Northern India: Selections from Heber's Journal*, p. 227.

<sup>30</sup> A '*chilla kbaana*' was a place, attached to a dargah or shrine where devotional activities occurred.

<sup>31</sup> The historic and urban settlement around the *dargah* is collectively referred to as *Nizamuddin* in the modern context, named after Nizamuddin Auliya, the sufi saint.

<sup>32</sup> See Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 39-41.

<sup>33</sup> *Annual report: Northern Circle, Superintendent of Muhammedan and British Monuments*, 1917, p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> When visited by the author in June 2002, these chambers housed an exhibition about the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) grant and restoration project. The panels on display highlighted the history of the complex, its architectural and landscape features. They also delineated the objectives of the AKTC and its interest in the project, explaining the need and process of intervention in the landscape of the complex. For details refer Appendix (II).

<sup>35</sup> *Annual report: Northern Circle, Superintendent of Muhammedan and British Monuments*, 1917, p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 41-42.

<sup>37</sup> '*Qibla*' is the *direction of Mecca which determines the direction of Muslim prayer*. The qibla is the prime factor in the orientation of mosques and is usually marked by a mihrab (or more in India). Many early mosques were not built to a correct qibla orientation, as has been demonstrated in the excavations of the Great Mosque of Wasit, where three different qibla orientations are recorded. It is believed that idea of qibla orientation is derived from the Jewish practice of indicating the direction of Jerusalem in synagogues.

<sup>38</sup> Swati Mitra (ed.) *Humayun's Tomb and Adjacent Monuments*, World Heritage Series (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2002), pp. 60-61.

<sup>39</sup> Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 45-47.

<sup>40</sup> The presence of the *chilla kbaana* indicates that it existed on the site before Humayun's Tomb was built, and that it was retained on the site so that the connection between the two structures and the activities that took place there could be maintained. The *chilla kbana* was an extension for the devotional activities occurring at the *dargah* into the tomb. See S. A. A. Naqvi, *Humayun's Tomb and adjacent buildings*, (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1947), p. 15.

's reign were mostly strategic.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Narrative of a Dynastic Icon**

This chapter deals with the time during and immediately following the construction of Humayun's Tomb - the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This Mughal period was marked by Akbar's accession to the throne after the death of his father Humayun, the shift of the Mughal court and capital from Delhi to Agra and the construction of Humayun's Tomb between 1561 and 1572.<sup>1</sup> It was a period that saw critical changes being introduced in the political and administrative setup of the empire.

The first section of this chapter deals with establishing the historic context of Humayun's Tomb – the prevalent political, social and religious conditions. It analyzes the architectural features and their representation in light of these conditions. While the architecture of the tomb merits a detailed discussion in view of its significance to the development of Islamic architecture in India, that is outside the scope of this study. The discussion revolves around only those features that contribute significantly to the overall perception of the building and evaluates how they contribute to the overall experience of the tomb. The second section contains an analysis of the way Humayun's Tomb was perceived during the Mughal era. It traces the symbolic development of its perception as a Mughal dynastic icon in conjunction with the tradition of imperial visits and Nizamuddin Auliya's dargah.

### **3.1 THE EVENTS AROUND HUMAYUN'S DEATH**

After spending fifteen years in exile, Humayun recaptured his lost empire in 1555. However, he did not survive his return for long. He had taken up residence at the citadel built by Sher Shah, housed within the city of Din Panah.<sup>2</sup> On January 20, 1556, while descending the steps of the Sher Mandal- his library (Fig.8), he heard the call for prayer. It is believed that he fell because his foot got caught in his robes while performing the prayer on the steps. The head injuries inflicted were fatal and he remained on the verge of death for three days before finally passing away.<sup>3</sup>

Humayun died on January 24, 1556 but his tomb was not built immediately after. Though historic texts do not state the reason for this, it can be assumed that the intermediate period was one of political turmoil and expansion for the Mughal Empire under Akbar's rule. Humayun's reign in India had been discontinuous; hence, one of Akbar's primary concerns upon assuming control was to establish a secure and stable Mughal empire. The instability of the empire was also the reason why Humayun's death was not announced immediately after, but withheld for seventeen days till Akbar ascended the throne.<sup>4</sup> When the tomb's construction started, Akbar had begun a siege of central India, having ousted the North Indian king Hemu. His campaign was long and successful; when the tomb was completed in 1572, he had annexed most of north and middle India.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, Humayun's Tomb also commemorates the establishment of a vast empire under Akbar's leadership, as a symbol of the Mughal might in the country.

The date of construction of the tomb also remains a debated point with scholars. The date followed by most scholars is that of 1565.<sup>6</sup> However, an alternative and earlier date has been proposed as 1562/3 with its completion within eight or nine years in 1570/71.<sup>7</sup> Till the tomb was completed, Humayun's body did not remain interred in one place but was moved around. He was initially buried at Purana Qila but was removed to a *supurdgah* (tomb) in Sirhind when Hemu advanced upon Delhi in 1556 and the Mughals had to vacate the city. However, Akbar avenged his defeat to Hemu within a month and the body of Humayun was moved back into the Sher Mandal and it remained there till the completion of the Tomb.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2 THE CONTESTED ISSUE OF THE TOMB'S PATRONAGE

Most academic and popular perceptions about Humayun's Tomb maintain that Haji Begum, his widow, was its patron. This notion about patronage has been perpetuated

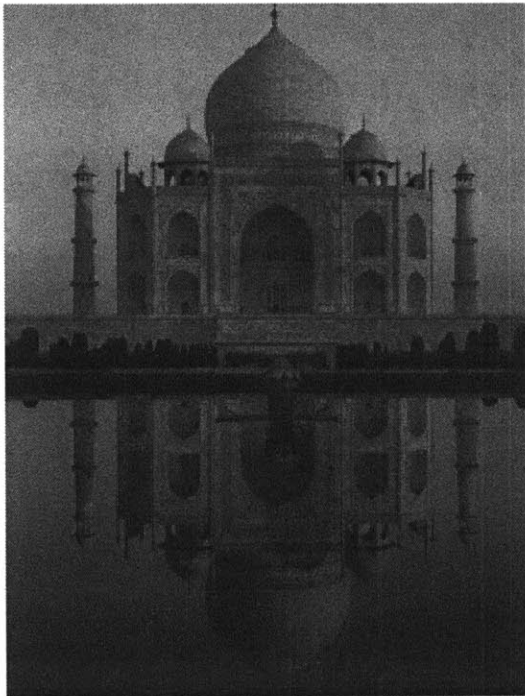


Fig.32. The Taj Mahal.

by the lack of historic records that directly address this issue. An argument used to substantiate Haji Begum's patronage has been the claim that she brought workmen from Persia, on her return from Hajj, who were housed in the Arab Sarai.<sup>9</sup> However, the name and function of this building remain a debated historic fact- '*Arab Sarai*' is merely a local designation (see Chapter 2).

The need to generate a romantic notion in context of the tomb similar to that of its more famous counterpart, the Taj Mahal, presents another possibility for the provenance of the popular notion attributing patronage to Haji Begum. The immense popularity of the Taj as a place of tourist import does not stem only from its architectural beauty (Fig.32). Appreciation for the building also stems from the associated history of its patron Shahjahan; the notion of a loving husband building the most beautiful tomb for his wife evokes a compelling romantic memory that operates at a symbolic level.<sup>10</sup> The obvious similarities in the architectural form of the Taj and Humayun's Tomb and the accompanying discrepancy in their popularity as places of tourist interest forms the context for patronage to be attributed to Humayun's wife. This assumption works on a notion parallel but reverse to that of the Taj – that of a loving wife constructing a tomb for her husband.

The alternative and logical patronage for the tomb can be attributed to Akbar. It can be argued that since Haji Begum had been away from India for *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) at the time the tomb's construction began, the prevalent claims about her patronage are invalid.<sup>11</sup> Further, the layout of the tomb in its garden setting along with the spiritual and political meanings associated with it at the time it was built imply Akbar's patronage rather than that of Haji Begum. Akbar is known to have executed several structures of similar scale and scheme. His patronage is substantiated by the following study of the meanings manifest in the tomb's built form.



### 3.3 A POLITICAL MANIFESTO FOR THE TOMB

This period in the Mughal Empire witnessed critical changes in the state policy introduced by Akbar. Most important among these were the legal inclusion of *Hindus* and *Rajputs* in his Islamic empire, revocation of *jizya*<sup>12</sup> and his marriage to *Hindu/Rajput* princesses. Many of his chief ministers and intimate friends were Hindus. Subsequently, he founded *Din-i-Ilahi* (Divine Faith), a new religion that reconciled the principles of Islam and Hinduism and attempted to establish religious harmony. All these acts were garnered towards creating political alliances and the establishment of a powerful and stable Mughal empire. The manifestation of these policies extended beyond the political and social, into the architectural realm.

Under his reign, there was a concerted attempt to avoid adopting a purely Persian/ Islamic style of building as can be found in Humayun's Tomb, Fatehpur Sikri and his own mausoleum at Sikandra (Fig.33). Akbar is known to have been an admirer of regional styles of architecture and local Hindu craftsmanship. His architecture cannot be classified into any distinct pre-existing style but synthesized from existing patterns and motifs to establish a new precedent within the Mughal tradition of building.

Humayun's Tomb, through the fusion of Timurid/Islamic and Hindu architectural elements in its design and form,<sup>13</sup> particular choice of building material,<sup>14</sup> unprecedented garden setting and overall monumental execution can be considered a manifestation of his vision of kingship- that of a stable, strong and tolerant Islamic empire. In addition to these political associations, the tomb is also symbolic of his personal spiritual aspirations. How these translated into the narrative of the tomb at the time it was built has been discussed in the following sections.

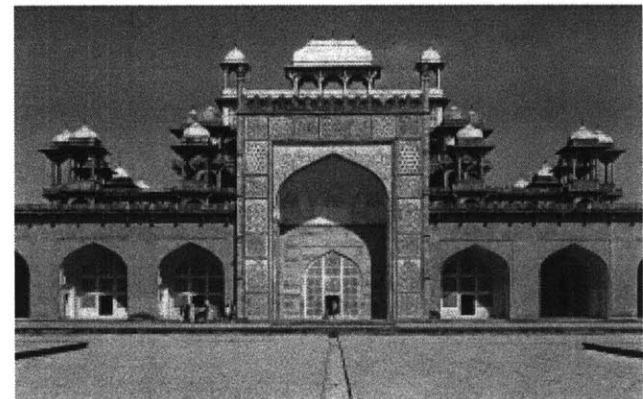


Fig.33. Akbar's Tomb at Sikandra.

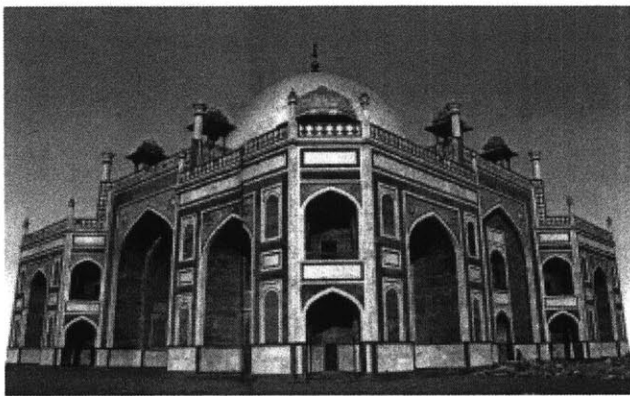


Fig.34. Use of red and white stone to highlight main features.

Fig.35. Decorative features of the western archway of the tomb:  
inlaid stone panels, star motif and geometric patterns.

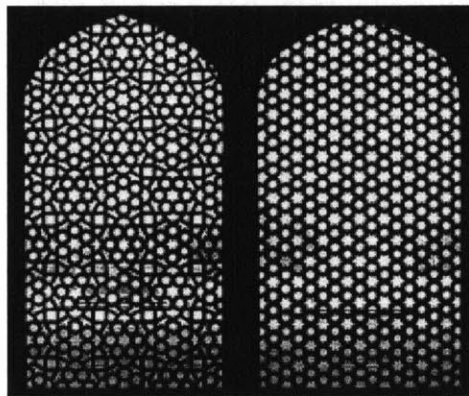
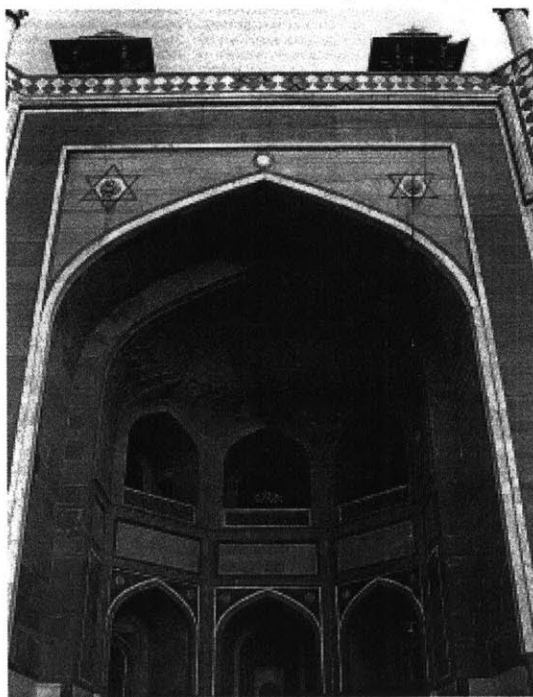


Fig.36. Intricately carved stone screens in tomb.

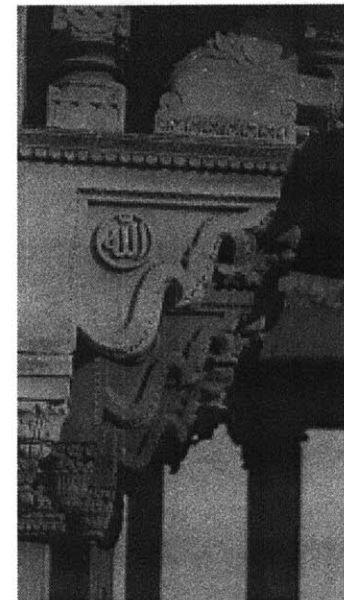


Fig.38. Bracket detail on the terrace.



Fig.37. Inside view of dome over a side tomb chamber.  
The dome is decorated with stucco carving.



Fig.39. Lotus minaret placed at the  
corners of the main and small iwans.

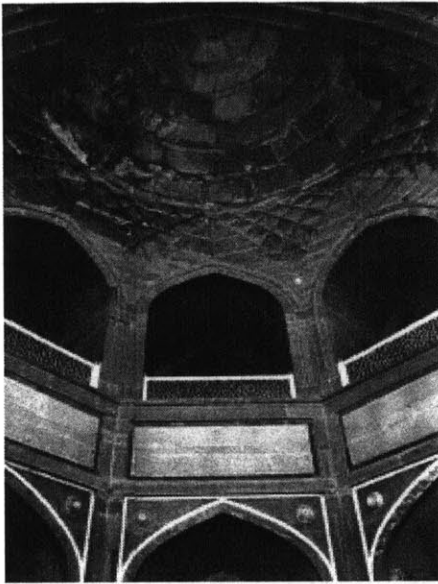


Fig.40. Inside view of dome over side chamber



Fig.42. View from stairs leading from the tomb's plinth upto the platform of the main tomb chamber.

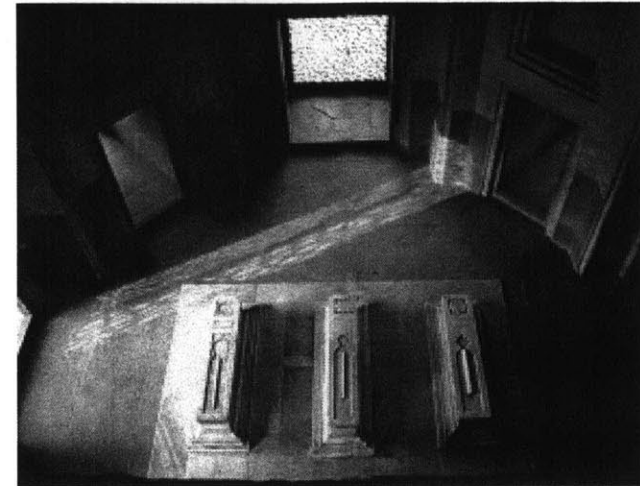


Fig.44. Royal family members buried in side chamber of the tomb.

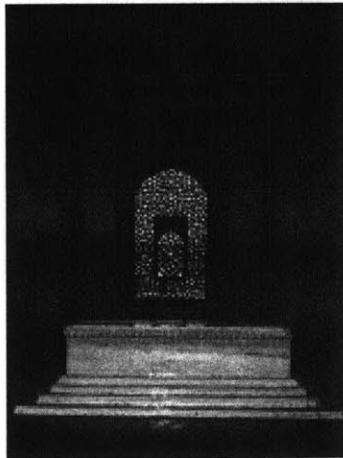


Fig.41. Sarcophagus of Humayun. Visible in the background is the mihrab inscribed in the stone screen.



Fig.43. The high plinth of the tomb structure houses 54 small cells. Many of these cells house graves of the Mughal royal family, making Humayun's Tomb a dynastic burial structure.

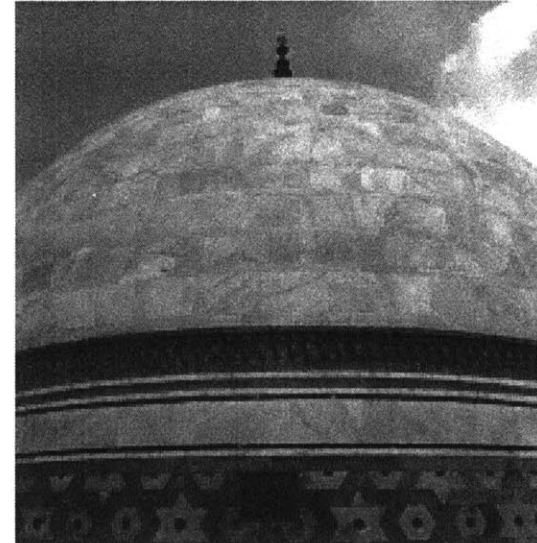


Fig.45. The dome over the main tomb chamber, covered in white marble. The drum is adorned with colored inlaid stone panels.

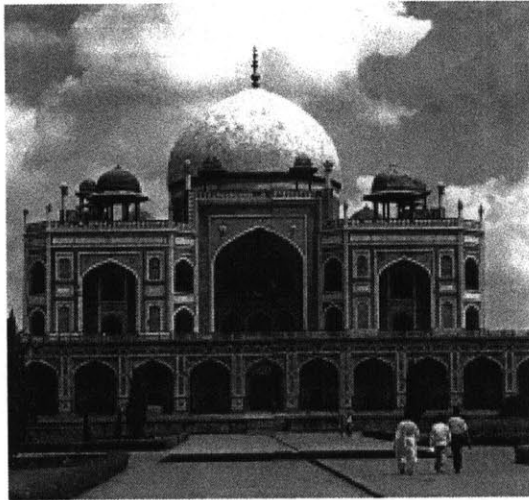
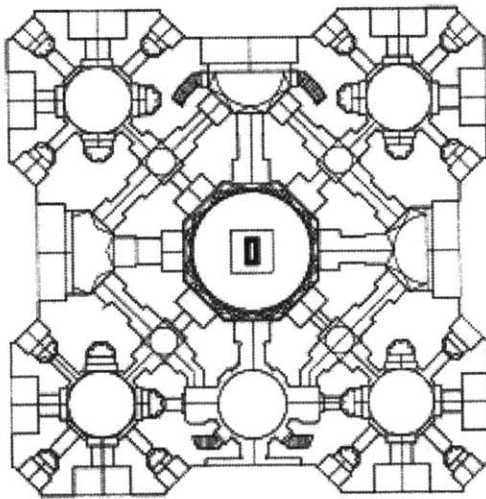


Fig.46. Main elevation of tomb as seen from visitors entry.

Fig.47. Nine-fold plan of the tomb structure.



### 3.4 HUMAYUN'S TOMB: FORM AND MEANINGS

The tomb sits at the center of a plinth, about 21 feet high. The top of its central dome reaches 140 feet from the ground. The dome is double-layered; the outer layer supports the white marble facing (Fig.45), while the inner one defines the interior volume. The rest of the tomb is clad in red sandstone, with white marble ornamentation (Fig.34). A large *iwān* punctuates the center of each facade, and is set back slightly. Together, with the other arches and openings, this effect creates a varied and complex impression of depth at each facade. Detailed ornamentation in three colors of stone adds to the richness of the surfaces. The plan of the tomb is intricate. It is a square 'nine-fold plan' (Fig.47), where eight two-storied vaulted chambers radiate from the central, double-height domed chamber. The chambers of each level are interconnected by straight and diagonal passages. Each of the main chambers has, in turn, eight more chambers radiating from it. The symmetrical ground plan contains one hundred and twenty-four vaulted chambers in all.

The sarcophagus of Humayun is in the central domed chamber, the head pointing south and facing east, in accordance with Islamic burial practice (Fig.41). The vaulted chambers also contain sarcophagi that were added later. The sex of each occupant is marked by a simple carved symbol: a box of writing instruments indicates a male, and a writing slate indicates a female. The sarcophagi are not otherwise inscribed, but among them are known to be those containing the wives of Humayun, and several later Mughal emperors and princes (Fig.44). Many of the tomb's elements, such as the octagonal plan and high *iwāns* (Fig.35), are derived from earlier tombs. The unprecedented scale and grandeur of the monument, however, are aspects that were to define much of subsequent Mughal tomb building. The tomb design is attributed to Sayyid Muhammad and his father, Mirak Sayyid Ghiyath (Mirak Mirza Ghiyas), Persian architects and poets active in the Timurid and later the Mughal courts.

### 3.4.1 SCALE OF THE TOMB

The most notable feature of the tomb is its size. The garden setting allows for better visual perception of its monumental scale and sets it apart from all other historic buildings in its vicinity. The tomb completely dominates its surrounding skyline. The visibility of the tomb from the east side of the city, all along the banks of River Yamuna remains unhindered even today. At the time it was built, the tomb dominated the skyline of its western extents as well, where Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* is located.

Islamic India had been witness to a lot of building activity since the Sultanate era and tombs were the predominant building types. Notable among them were the tomb of Ghiyasuddin Tughluq and Lodi kings located in Delhi. Other magnificent structures were the tombs of Humayun's archrival Sher Shah Sur and his son, located at Sassaram (Fig.48). Most Islamic tombs built until then, with these exceptions, had been on a modest scale. These two tombs, placed at the centre of large pools of water, established a new precedent for the construction of imperial tombs.<sup>15</sup> The tradition of building monumental tombs had not been prevalent until its inception by the Mughals with Humayun's Tomb. This tomb established a new typological norm and structures on a similar scale were executed during the reign of Akbar, Jahangir and ShahJahan (Fig.49).<sup>16</sup>

The impressive scale of Humayun's Tomb is the realization of twin objectives- an emulation of established visions of imperial grandeur reflected in existing tombs like that of Sher Shah and an attempt to outdo them by establishing a new typological precedent. It also served the purpose of visually proclaiming the might of the Mughal presence in India. At a global level, it is one of the few tombs of its nature and scale in the Islamic world. However, size is not the only perceptible visual characteristic of the tomb having symbolic implications; the architectural elements of its radially symmetric plan, high drum and double dome have also been studied and interpreted.<sup>17</sup>

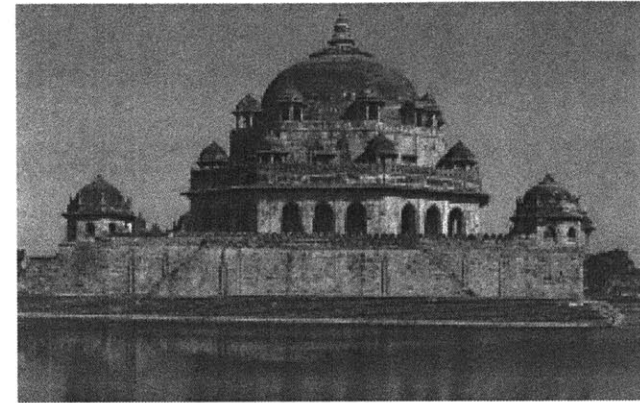


Fig.48. Tomb of Sher Shah Sur at Sassaram. The tomb is placed at the center of a large pool.

Fig.49. Tomb of Itmadul-Daula built during the reign of Shah Jahan.

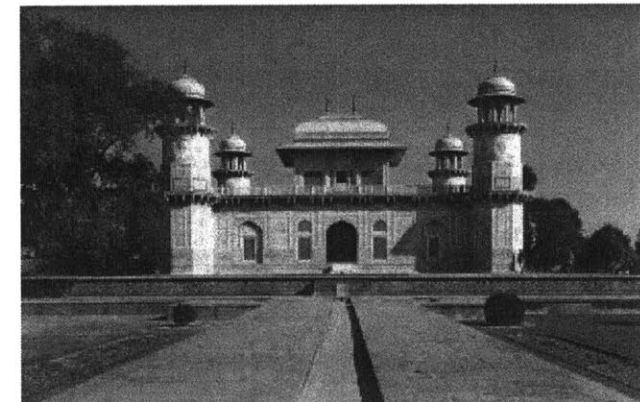






Fig.50. Mosque of Jamali Kamali.

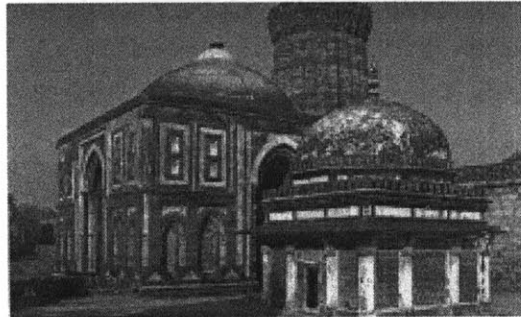
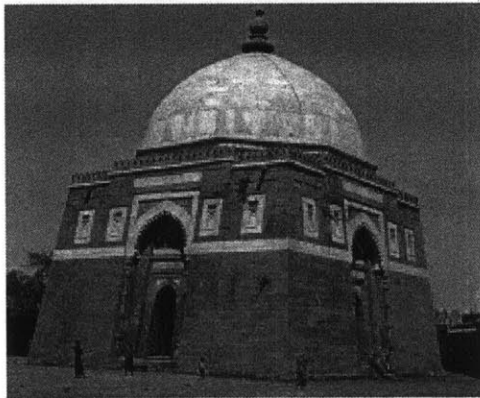


Fig.51. Alai Darwaza (next to the Qutub Minar).

Fig.52. Tomb of Ghiyasuddin Tughluq.



### 3.4.2 CHOICE OF BUILDING MATERIAL

Humayun's Tomb is built of a rubble core covered extensively by red sandstone (Fig.34). Ornamentation consists of inscribed marble panels inlaid with colored stones. Key architectural features have been highlighted using white marble designs while the dome is completely covered by marble (Fig.45). This choice of material can be placed within the existing tradition of Mughal architecture at that time- the pavilion at Din Panah (Sher Mandal), the Mosque of Jamali Kamali (1530) (Fig.50), the Qala-i-Kunha Mosque (1534) and the Tomb of Atgah Khan (1567). All these structures use the same combination of building materials within a similarly articulated system of architectural features. The preponderance of the use of these materials in the sixteenth century can be termed as the revival (that began in the late fifteenth century) of an architectural tradition dating back to the Khilji (1290-1320) and Tughluq (1320-1414) buildings in fourteenth century India. One of the first examples of this particular combination of materials is Alai Darwaza in the Qutub Complex (Fig.51) built by Alauddin Khilji in 1313. This tradition was followed by the Tughluqs, exemplified by the tomb of Ghiyasuddin Tughluq built in 1325 (Fig.52). The articulation of materials is similar in these two buildings. However, unlike other structures of its time, which had rubble domes finished in plaster, Ghiyasuddin Tughluq's tomb is capped by a marble dome- a feature shared by Humayun's Tomb. The tradition of building with these materials soon ended and Sultanate monuments of the fifteenth century were predominantly constructed with locally available grey quartzite decorated with tiles or plaster.

The use and articulation of red sandstone and white marble combination visually related Humayun's Tomb to the existing Islamic tradition of building in Delhi, capital of most Islamic empires in India. By visually alluding to their monuments, Humayun's Tomb projected the Mughal dynasty as a legitimate successor to the Islamic political presence in India.

### 3.4.3 DECORATIVE ELEMENTS

The tomb, often termed ‘austere’ in terms of its appearance,<sup>18</sup> uses simple decorative features. The use of red sandstone and white marble is in itself a decorative feature articulated as alternating bands of color on the elevation (Fig.55). The colonettes and *chattris* are executed in red sandstone while screens and arches are highlighted with white marble. This is supplemented with inlaid panels of stone and motifs<sup>19</sup> made in stucco (Fig.53). The use of inlaid panels as decorative features is rare in India prior to the second quarter of the sixteenth century, although the technique itself was not new.<sup>20</sup> In the Sher Mandal, the mosque of Jamali Kamali (1530) and the Qala-I Kunha Mosque (1534), inlaid panels have been used sparingly to highlight select architectural features. However, the Tomb of Atgah Khan (1567) displays the use of this feature in profusion and articulation similar to Humayun’s Tomb (Fig.54). This is indicative of a sequential development of this feature in Mughal architecture.

The use of inlaid panels as a decorative feature in Humayun’s Tomb assumes significance when analyzed within its historic context. Akbar is known to have encouraged his artists to develop a system of signs for representation that would not require text, would be visually assimilated and operated on traditional and familiar symbols.<sup>21</sup> This aspect of the ruler’s interest is evident in the development of patterns and motifs used for Humayun’s Tomb. Its most evident manifestation is in the extensive use of simple geometric shapes for the tomb’s decoration. The popular Sultanate and Timurid traditions of ornamentation had been stucco and inlaid stone, usually used extensively all over the elevation and especially along arched entranceways and niches. This tomb uses both stucco and stone inlay sparingly. It is also distinct in the nature of the forms used for the same. While tombs built before used elaborate and floral designs, there is very little use of such patterns or motifs in Humayun’s Tomb. This contributes to the overall visual impact of the tomb as bold and stark.

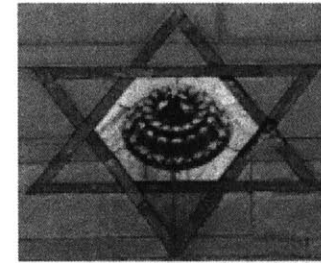


Fig.53. Star motif used in Humayun’s Tomb.

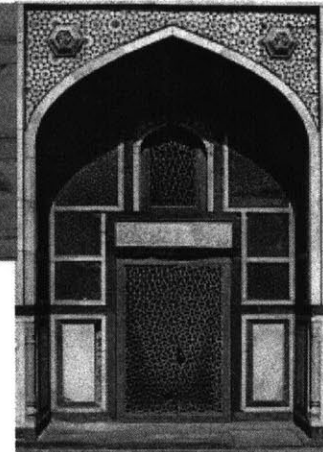
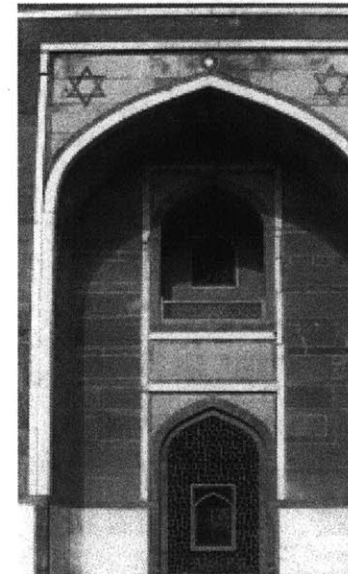


Fig.54. Decoration in Atgah Khan’s Tomb using inlaid stone.

Fig.55. Articulation of decoration using red and white stone.



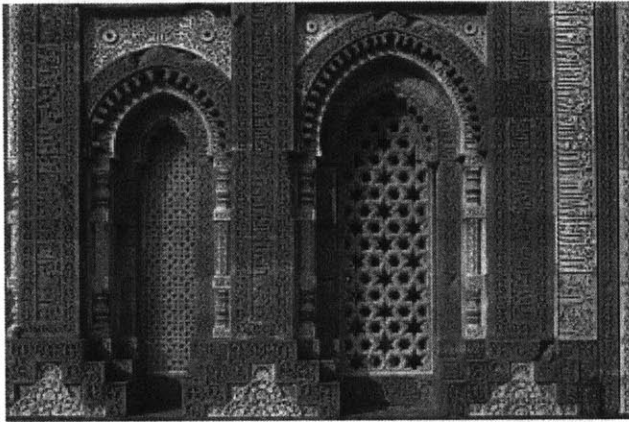


Fig.56. Calligraphy on elevation of Alai Darwaza, Qutub Complex.



Fig.57. Stucco Inscriptions on mihrab in Sikander Lodi's Tomb, Delhi.

#### 3.4.4 ABSENCE OF INSCRIPTIONS

Among the new typological precedents established by Humayun's Tomb, an important break in the existing tradition of Islamic tombs is the absence of inscriptions. Most tombs built earlier had used them for maintaining a religious and spiritual association (Fig.56). The archway above entry points and the *mihrab*<sup>22</sup> in the tomb chambers were usually carved with inscriptions from the *Quran*, forging a symbolic religious connection. Inscriptions served another function- that of conveying information about the person buried in the tomb, the date of construction, patronage etc. The material for inscriptions had been stucco with alternating bands in carved sandstone, like those found in thirteenth and fourteenth century Delhi tombs of the Sultanate Era (Fig.57).

However, the absence of *Quranic* inscriptions or any other form of calligraphy is significant not just for typological reasons but for the tomb itself; identification of the tomb would have become difficult but for written records of the Mughal court and travelers accounts from the sixteenth century onwards. This aspect of the tomb that could be interpreted as a desire for anonymity contrasts its monumental scale, architectural features and garden layout. One possible reason for this can be Akbar's illiteracy.<sup>23</sup> This worked in conjunction with his drive to establish a visual system of communication, mentioned in the previous section. Another possible answer stems from Akbar's projected image as a just and tolerant ruler.<sup>24</sup> Arabic inscriptions introduced an element of selectivity in representation and perceived experience of a tomb for its audience. Given Akbar's attempts to bridge the gap between the Muslims and Hindus of his empire and forge political relations with *Hindu/ Rajput* neighbors, the absence of Arabic inscriptions in the tomb built under his patronage seems logical. It reflects Akbar's conscious attempt to make the building and its meanings apparent and accessible to all. Additionally, the construction of a strong spiritual association for the tomb (discussed later in this chapter) rendered verbal association secondary.



### 3.4.5 VISUAL ORDER

The grand layout of Humayun's Tomb, with cross-axial water channels and the position of the tomb at their center, conveys the king both as a person and an institution- the central figure in the structure of the Mughal kingdom.<sup>25</sup> The position of the tomb at the center of the layout is not incidental. It is meant to metaphorically evoke Humayun's presence. The visual order created by the tomb in its garden setting was intended to steer the viewers to an interpretation of the tomb and garden as metaphors for the king in his paradisiacal abode (Fig.25). The water pools, the fountains, the orchards resplendent with fruit trees, the lush green grass- all were intended to evoke in the viewer the dead person's aspiration for paradise.<sup>26</sup> A quote from the *Humayun-Nama* where he has been addressed as '*Guardian of the world, whose nest is in paradise*' – is perhaps a direct allusion to the symbolic content of his tomb.<sup>27</sup>

Inside the tomb, the central chamber is walled by stone *jaalis* (screens), which create the distinction between the burial chamber and the space outside and 'visually separate the living from the dead.'<sup>28</sup> The screens, a later addition, created a symbolic barrier of sorts between the tomb and the visitor<sup>29</sup> (Fig.36 and 58). The body of Emperor Humayun is buried in a crypt under the plinth of the tomb. The visitor is audience to a marker of the king's tomb, placed directly above the real one, as its symbol (Fig.41).

These symbolic associations of the tomb that were perceptible visual were reinforced by the practice of imperial rituals and prayers. The rituals were borrowed from the spiritual context of their location near Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah*. They added meaning to the building beyond its commemorative function. When the tomb was built, an annual ceremony would take place there, in addition to other small events in memory of Humayun.<sup>30</sup> Akbar is also known to have made regular pilgrimages to the tomb that added to its importance, discussed later in this chapter.

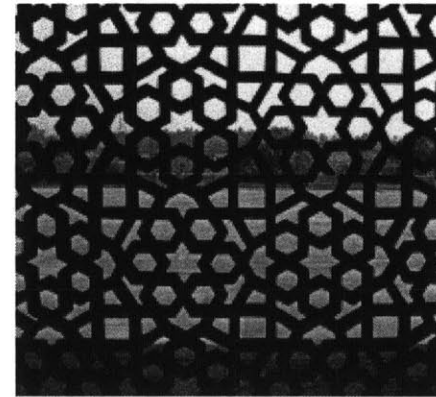


Fig.58. Stone screen in the tomb chamber.

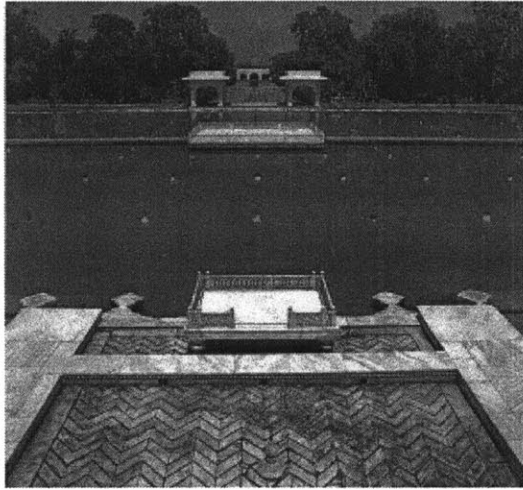


Fig.59. Shalimar Gardens built by Shah Jahan in Lahore.



Fig.60. Tomb of Ghiyasuddin Tughluq in its walled enclosure.

### 3.4.6 UNPRECEDENTED GARDEN SETTING FOR THE TOMB

The garden setting for Humayun's Tomb can be described as unprecedented. A number of studies have focused around the formal qualities of its layout, its symbolism<sup>31</sup> and the issue of the provenance of such a concept. But the concept of the garden itself is not new in India or elsewhere in the Islamic world. Its scale and layout are what make it special, along with the fact that it is the first existing example of a scheme that can be witnessed in later monuments (Fig59).<sup>32</sup> Its *Chahar-Bagh* layout can be ascribed to a Timurid influence. The *chahar-bagh* (Iranian and Mughal term for a formal garden laid out in four plots of equal size and divided by cross axial arrangement of canals or pathways) was used for most fifteenth and sixteenth century Central Asian gardens.<sup>33</sup>

Although a number of gardens were built in India in the pre-Mughal era, there is no evidence of a *chahar-bagh* layout in them. Most of the existing examples had their focus on the articulation of water bodies like pools, lakes and ponds. The building would be placed as the focus of a system organized for either the provision of water to the landscape or the security of the building by surrounding it with water (Palace in Mandu, India).<sup>34</sup> Thus the landscape itself was never articulated in a detailed manner. It is with Babur that the idea of gardens was first introduced in that particular form.<sup>35</sup>

Earlier tombs in India were situated in clearly defined spaces, as in the case of Ghiyasuddin Tughluq's tomb (Fig.60). The tombs of Isa Khan (placed in a walled enclosure) and Sher Shah (placed in a huge pool of water) show the development of the idea of placing the tomb in a special setting- a clearly marked space that would physically differentiate the imperial tomb from its surroundings. Hence, the garden setting of Humayun's Tomb is the confluence of two traditions; the Timurid *chahar-bagh* (identifying the paradisiacal metaphor in its perception) and the Sultanate enclosed-tomb (giving it uniqueness and definition).

### 3.5 DELHI AS A POLITICAL AND SPIRITUAL CAPITAL

Delhi was designated the rightful center of command for entire *Hindustan* (India). It had become a historic capital and a potent political symbol of power due to the succession of historic cities built there since the end of the twelfth century. It had been the capital from the time of Qutub-ud-din Aibak (1206) until 1506 when Sikandar Lodi moved the center of government to Agra.<sup>36</sup> Although Babur and Akbar continued with Agra as the seat of the Mughal Empire, Humayun had ruled from Delhi until his death in 1556. Hence, Delhi's role as the principal center of Islamic rule had not diminished. The accounts of European travelers to Mughal Delhi also reinforce this image of a city that was '*great*' and '*ancient*' and the '*Royal Seat of the Kings of India*'.<sup>37</sup>

For the local people, the city had another and more popular association- that of a religious centre, a place of pilgrimage and one of the most pious sites in Muslim India. This image had accrued over a long period. It was the result of the increasing number of shrines of *sufi* saints, *pirs* and holy men. Prime among them were Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya (died in 1325) and Sheikh Nasir-al-Din *Chiragh-I-Dihli*<sup>38</sup> (died 1356). These centers were frequented by pilgrims, particularly on the *urs* (anniversary of the saint's death) to present offerings, pray, seek advice or help. Akbar's activities at Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* represent the imperial patronage for these tombs.<sup>39</sup> It was this existing image of the city as a spiritual centre in which Humayun's Tomb established itself as the most important site in the sixteenth century. The activities performed at the tomb were like those at other religious sites- the annual ceremony, the giving of alms etc. What distinguished the tomb from others was that it remained largely within the Mughal imperial patronage, never quite extending its activities into the public realm. Nonetheless, this aspect was suppressed in the tomb's projection as the most important site in Delhi by virtue of an overpowering imperial patronage, grand scale and the manner in which it was written about in the recorded texts of the times.<sup>40</sup>

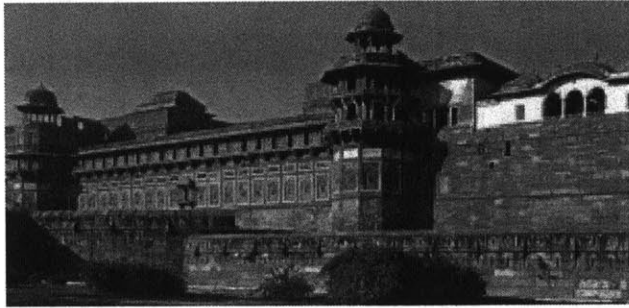


Fig.61. Agra Fort, the new seat of the Mughal Empire, built by Akbar, when he moved the capital back to Agra from Delhi.

### 3.5.1 HUMAYUN'S TOMB AND MUGHAL IMPERIAL VISITS

Akbar, like Babur, moved the capital to Agra for strategic reasons (Fig.61). However, Akbar stayed at Delhi for brief spells, overseeing the construction of Humayun's Tomb during the early stages of his reign. This tradition continued even after the tomb had been completed and in later years, his visits to the city assumed the pattern of a pilgrimage of sorts that included perambulation of certain selected sites in the city, primary amongst which was the tomb. This chronology of imperial visits to Delhi<sup>41</sup> is critical as it developed into a discernable pattern that contributed significantly to two related developments - 1) it maintained a symbolic political presence of the dynasty in Delhi in spite of their physical absence, 2) It perpetuated the image of Humayun's Tomb as a dynastic center and a venerated site.

Babur, who established his capital at Agra, is attributed with initiating the tradition of Mughal imperial tours of the urban area of Delhi when he came to the city after his victory at Panipat in 1526. 'The new Timurid conqueror appropriated the old capital of Delhi Sultanate by a perambulation of what he considered the most important historical sites'.<sup>42</sup> His autobiography mentions this visit as follows:

*'After we had made the circuit of Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya's tomb, we dismounted on the bank of the Jaum over against Dibli. That same night we made an excursion into the fort of Dibli and there spent the night. Next day I made a circuit of Khwaja Qutubuddin's tomb and visited the tombs and residences of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban and Sultan Alauddin Khalji, his Minar and the Hauz-Shamsi, Hauz-i-Khas and the tombs and gardens of Sultan Bahlal and Sultan Sikandar (Lodi). On Thursday we dismounted on the Bank of the Jaum, over against Tughlaqabad.'*<sup>43</sup>

The political implications of this visit are borne by the fact that he later sent a delegation of religious men to Delhi to have the *khutba* (sermon) read in his name- an act by which, according to Islamic practice, a ruler formally assumed sovereignty. Babur's

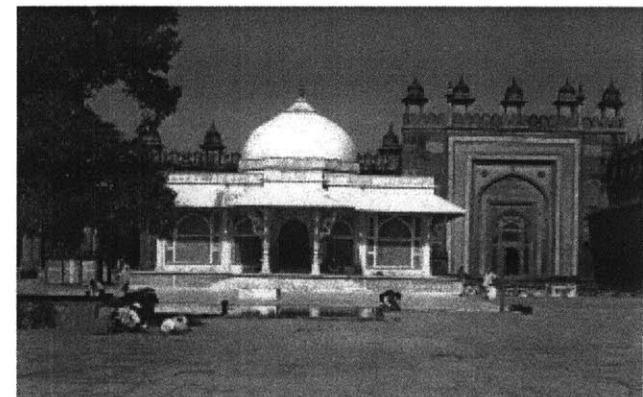
perambulation of Delhi was inspired by the example of his great paternal ancestor Timur, who after his conquest of Delhi in 1398 had the *khutba* read in his name at the Masjid-i-Jami and other mosques of Delhi. He even took a ride around the cities of Siri, Qila-Rai-Pithora and Jahanpanah.<sup>44</sup> Babur's visit may be seen as simply that of a sightseer. However, in context of its historical precedent, the event assumes symbolic significance. The two most striking ideas associated with this visit are the appropriation of specific sites with strong dynastic overtones and an association with the spirituality of the *Sufis*, both of which were to become an integral aspect of later perambulations that included Humayun's Tomb among other sites.

After Humayun took residence in 1555 having re-conquered the city, there is only one recorded excursion of the emperor to the shrines of *sufis* such as Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya. This break in the tradition of imperial visits can be attributed to the unstable nature of his empire and his oust from power. Akbar's imperial visits have continuous records 1564 onwards, which was his first visit to Delhi after descending to the throne. The following is a brief excerpt from the official record of the 1577 visit:

*'The capital of Delhi was glorified by the Shahinshah's advent. First of all he circumambulated the holy shrine of His Majesty Jannat Ashiyani (Humayun) and showered gifts on the custodians. Then he visited other tombs and was also lavish in his gifts there.'*<sup>45</sup>

In light of Akbar's well-known devotion to *Sufism*, it can be assumed that one of the shrines he visited was of Nizamuddin Auliya. Out of the eleven visits reported by his historians, Akbar went to Humayun's Tomb nine times and to the tombs of saints eight times. This establishes the idea that he considered Delhi a place of *ziyarat* (pilgrimage) and for him the most important sites were those of Humayun and Auliya. He built the shrine of Salim Chisti at Fatehpur Sikri (Fig.62).

Fig.62. Tomb of Salim Chisti at Fatehpur Sikri built by Akbar.



Continuing in the tradition of Mughal imperial visits, Jahangir (Akbar's son and successor) is also known to have passed through Delhi and stopped briefly at the tombs of both Humayun and Auliya to seek intercession.<sup>46</sup> Of importance is the visit in 1619 on his way to Lahore and Kashmir when he visited the same sites visited by Akbar in an attempt to emulate an established Mughal Imperial precedent that had assumed not only political connotations but spiritual significance as well.

*Dihli, the abode of blessings, was adorned by the alighting of the army of good fortune. At first I hastened with my children and the ladies on a visit to the enlightened shrine of Humayun (ba ziyarat-i rauza-i munawwara Hazrat Jannat Ashiyani) and having made our offerings there, went off to circumambulate the blessed Mausoleum (ba tawaf-i rauza-i mutabarraka) of the king of holy men (Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya).<sup>47</sup>*

This event can be considered an attempt to reactivate his association with Akbar and establish a link in the continuing tradition of these imperial visits, in addition to seeking religious blessings that Humayun's Tomb had been attributed with. While his imperial visits were neither as frequent nor as religious as Akbar's had been, there was an undeniable reaffirmation of the religious status accorded to Humayun as a divine persona; through the actions performed at the tomb as well as the manner in which the court chronicles address Humayun – *Jannat Ashiyani*.<sup>48</sup> Although the primary purpose of most visits was hunting, for which he would take up residence at Salimgarh,<sup>49</sup> his visits would include a *ziyarat* of Humayun's Tomb and Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah*.

ShahJahan's visit after he ascended to the throne in 1628 is recorded by a court account that enumerates the lighting of torches to 'keep light the place of resting of the soul of the great saint (Humayun's Tomb)'. Shahjahan is also known to have distributed large amounts of money to the 'trustworthy' people of the *dargah* - to be distributed further

among the needy people of Delhi. This was critical in setting up the imperial ritual of giving alms at this site. The written records do not mention any such practice by visitors other than the imperial Mughals. The importance accorded to this visit is reflected by its detailed descriptions in contemporary chronicles.

*Hastened to perform the pilgrimage (ziyarat) to the mausoleum (rauza) of Hazrat Jannat Ashiyani (His Majesty Nestling in Paradise) Humayun Badshah. After carrying out the ceremony of the circumambulation (tawaf) of that exalted place he performed the ritual of visiting that great funerary enclosure (hazira) which is the most noble and august among the scared places of that land and carried out a distribution of largesse to the attendants and those employed in the service and the like of that place. After that, he turned towards the ziyarat of the holy tomb (marqad-i-muqaddas) of the leader of those who walk on the mystic path, the model of holy men, the Sultan of the Sbeikhs, Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya. And with full devotion he gained in abundance different kinds of blessings and spiritual strength (baraka).<sup>50</sup>*

This remained the pattern of the initial visits, which were begun at the tomb of Humayun, followed by a visit to the *dargah* and finally three to four days of hunting. However, once the construction of the new capital at Shahjahanabad was begun in 1638, there was a gradual but distinct change in the pattern. The visits began to focus more on the inspection of the progress of construction of his new city and fortress. In eventual visits, the *dargah* was dropped from the itinerary but Humayun's Tomb was retained. His last recorded visit to the capital shows that he did not visit any religious site. Hence, his reign was witness to the formalization of the ritual of imperial visits and also its dissolution. The gradual dying down of the ritual of imperial visits can primarily be attributed to the building of the new capital that shifted the locus of importance to a new site- the city of Shahjahanabad. This city had its own religious center- the Jama Masjid (Fig.63).

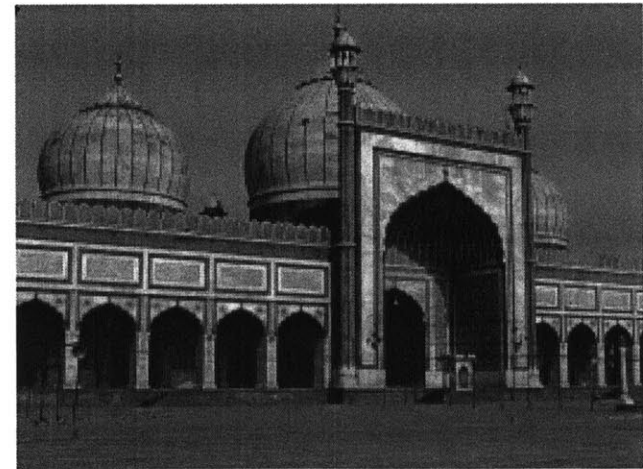


Fig.63. Jama Masjid in Shahjahanabad (Delhi), built by Shah Jahan.

### 3.5.2 A SYMBOLIC MUGHAL PRESENCE ON DELHI'S MAP

Although Humayun's presence in Delhi after re-conquering it lasted only six years, for the Mughal dynastic history it was an important episode symbolizing the establishment of their presence in the old capital. This need for dynastic association with Delhi is also borne out by the fact that when construction was begun on Humayun's Tomb in 1562, it was not built in Agra<sup>51</sup> where Akbar's court had already moved. At that time the area between Din Panah/ Purana Quila, Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* and the construction site of Humayun's Tomb was mildly populated and represented Mughal Delhi. The rest of the area was primarily desolate and uninhabited.<sup>52</sup>

In such a setting of desolation and absence of the court, Mughal imperial activities in the city were directed towards the primary objective of reinforcing their political presence symbolically. Through the perambulation of Humayun's Tomb, the rulers maintained a symbolic link not only to Emperor Humayun, Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* but also to the city of Delhi. Given the strategic and symbolic importance accorded to the city by all previous rulers, it comes as no surprise that the Mughals maintained their indirect presence there through appropriating these sites, especially Humayun's Tomb, when the capital had moved out of Delhi under Akbar's reign.

Once the capital moved back to Delhi in the seventeenth century under ShahJahan's rule, the tomb lost its strategic/symbolic importance. ShahJahan no longer needed to maintain a connection with Humayun's Tomb as the primary site of political and spiritual associations for the Mughals. In the creation of the new city, he had shifted the locus of political and architectural activity to Shahjahanabad. Over the course of the next century, Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* recovered and furthered its status as the primary spiritual centre of the city, displacing Humayun's Tomb as the preferred site



for royal Mughal burials. Following the construction of other royal tombs in the meanwhile (Akbar's Tomb at Sikandra, Jahangir's Tomb etc.), the importance accorded to the tomb as the first dynastic tomb also diminished in the court records.

In a discussion about the political implications, the tomb has been designated as 'an architectural manifesto of the Mughals as descendants of Timor taking over Hindustan. Clearly it was aimed at eclipsing the earlier mausoleums of the Timurids and the Delhi Sultanate'<sup>53</sup> – a valid claim, as there had been no other tombs of comparable monumentality in the sultanate. It was the primary building among others that located a Mughal presence on the architectural map of the city. The ritual of the imperial visit became a part of the urban context of the city incorporating sites that were focused on Delhi as the first capital of Muslim rule in India.

### 3.6 HUMAYUN'S TOMB AS A POLITICAL AND SPIRITUAL SYMBOL

The importance of the tomb is evident in the linguistic treatment meted out to it in the chronicles and court records from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and travelers' accounts. They project Humayun's Tomb in a manner parallel to the tomb of a *Sufi* or holy person. Of particular interest is the recurrence of the terms '*ziyarat*' that means pilgrimage, and '*tawaaf*' which means circumambulation, otherwise used in context of sacred/holy sites. The distribution of alms and donations at the site for the needy people of surrounding areas (and to the custodians in charge of the tomb's upkeep) by the visiting imperial powers also carries similar religious overtones. This practice is common at *dargahs* and spiritual sites.

Akbar's historians refer explicitly to his visits to Humayun's Tomb as those to '*the site of the holiest of tombs*', while other visits and pilgrimages are not treated with as much importance in the chronicles. There are a number of instances in Akbar's visits where

he omitted all other sites but the tomb from his visit. Even in ShahJahan's pattern of visits, though Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* had been omitted, Humayun's Tomb was retained. It was designated 'the most noble and august among the sacred places of the land'.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, it can be inferred that the tomb, originally a place of dynastic significance, eventually displaced Auliya's *dargah* as the place of prime religious import during the Mughal reign.

Through the discussion in this chapter, it becomes obvious that Humayun's Tomb assumed significance not only through a visual perception of its physical aspects of design and elaborate garden layout, but also at a symbolic level through its interrelated political and spiritual associations. It became a tool that served Akbar's specific political manifesto and his personal spiritual aspirations along with the interests of the Mughal dynasty at large. If analyzed in isolation, neither the architectural achievements of the tomb (its plan form, garden layout or decorative elements) nor its political/spiritual associations are without precedent. It is their assimilation in the tomb that lends it uniqueness. No previous tomb in India had been accorded such a high degree of combined significance. Previously built *dargah* and tombs had existed as exclusively political or spiritual centers. Hence, the status accorded to Humayun's Tomb during the first seventy years (1570-1640) of its history as a Mughal dynastic icon is unprecedented.

**NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> The exact date of the construction of Humayun's Tomb remains debated. See Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 136-138 and Swati Mitra (ed.) *Humayun's Tomb and Adjacent Monuments*, World Heritage Series (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2002), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 2 for a discussion about the debate around the patronage and existence of the two cities - Din Panah and Purana Quila.

<sup>3</sup> Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 133-134 and Gavin Hambly, *Cities of Mughul India: Delhi Agra and Fatehpur Sikri* (London: Elek, 1968), pp. 42-52.

<sup>5</sup> Glenn D. Lowry, "Humayun's Tomb: Form, Function, and Meaning in Early Mughal Architecture," *Muqarnas IV: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture* (Oleg Grabar, ed. Leiden: E.J. Brill 1987), p. 136.

<sup>6</sup> Swati Mitra (ed.) *Humayun's Tomb & Adjacent Monuments*, World Heritage Series (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2002), pp. 26.

<sup>7</sup> See Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), p. 136 for Badauni's accounts for the date of construction of the tomb.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp.135-136.

<sup>9</sup> The debate about the function of the *Arab Sarai* and its implications for the patronage of Humayun's Tomb persist. See Swati Mitra (ed.) *Humayun's Tomb and Adjacent Monuments*, World Heritage Series (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2002), pp. 66-67.

<sup>10</sup> Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* (1942; reprint Bombay, 1956), p. 97.

<sup>11</sup> Lowry proposed an alternative and convincing patronage for the tomb along with the dates for its construction. These are based on a study of historic texts from the Mughal Era and the author found his arguments compelling. See Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 136-138.

<sup>12</sup> *Jizya* was a discriminatory poll tax imposed on non-Muslims in the Islamic Empire. Akbar revoked this tax upon assuming power.

<sup>13</sup> The Timurid/Hindu elements and motifs have been discussed by Glenn D. Lowry in "Humayun's Tomb: Form, Function, and Meaning in Early Mughal Architecture", *Muqarnas IV: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture*, Oleg Grabar (ed.), (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), pp. 136-140.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 141. The use of red sandstone and white marble is common to Sultanate architecture in Delhi. Its use forged a visual connection to that past; establishing Humayun's Tomb in the tradition of previous Islamic presence in India, and Akbar (its patron) as the rightful successor.

<sup>15</sup> For details about the tombs and their design and layout see Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* (1942; reprint Bombay, 1956), pp. 90-94.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 99-119 and James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, Vol. 2 (1876; reprint New Delhi, 1972), pp. 293-318.

<sup>17</sup> Study of architectural and typological features like the drum, dome etc have not been included as they are technical details analyzed and usually noticed by a select audience. Their impact on popular perception is not significant.

<sup>18</sup> See the section '*Humayun's Tomb in Colonial Scholarship*' in Chapter 4.

<sup>19</sup> The appearance of the six pointed star as a motif in most architecture of that period is discussed in Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 118-120 and R. Nath, "Depiction of a Tantrik Symbol in Mughal Architecture", pp. 68-77. However, it was observed by the author that visitors to Humayun's Tomb do not distinguish it from other decorative elements as something worthy of attention. Hence, the discussion of the motifs possible origin and inclusion in the architecture of that time has not been included in this study.

<sup>20</sup> Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 115.

<sup>21</sup> Glenn D. Lowry in "Humayun's Tomb: Form, Function, and Meaning in Early Mughal Architecture", *Mugharnas IV: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture*, Oleg Grabar (ed.), (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), p. 145.

<sup>22</sup> *Mihrab* is a niche or marker used to indicate the direction of prayer in a mosque. It may also be present in other structures like tombs etc.

<sup>23</sup> It is a well-known historic fact that Akbar himself was illiterate and that this might be a possible reason for his interest in the development of a visual scheme of representation in his buildings, to remove a dependency on the written medium.

<sup>24</sup> Gavin Hambly, *Cities of Mughul India: Delhi Agra and Fatehpur Sikri* (London: Elek, 1968), pp. 42-53.

<sup>25</sup> D. Fairchild Ruggles, "Humayun's Tomb and Garden: Typologies and Visual Order", *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1997), pp. 176-177.

<sup>26</sup> For details about the Islamic doctrine of death as it relates to the tradition of tomb making, refer to the discussion in Godfrey Goodwin, "Gardens of the Dead in Ottoman Times," *Mugharnas V: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture* (Oleg Grabar, ed. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), pp. 62-65.

<sup>27</sup> Gulbadam Begum, *Humayun-Nama*, translated by Annette S Beveridge (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 1987), p. 83.

<sup>28</sup> D. Fairchild Ruggles, "Humayun's Tomb and Garden: Typologies and Visual Order", *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1997), p. 177.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 177-178.

<sup>30</sup> *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl-i-Allami, Vol. 1, trans. H. Blochmann (1939; rpt. New Delhi, 1997), p. 465.

<sup>31</sup> D. Fairchild Ruggles, "Humayun's Tomb and Garden: Typologies and Visual Order", *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1997), pp. 174-177 and Godfrey Goodwin, "Gardens of the Dead in Ottoman Times," *Muqarnas V: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture* (Oleg Grabar, ed. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), pp. 62-65.

<sup>32</sup> Some of the later schemes incorporating garden layout built during the reign of the Mughals are the Tomb of Itmad-ud-daula and Taj Mahal.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion about the evidence found in paintings and rugs showing the development of the garden layout see Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp - pp. 100-102.

<sup>34</sup> See Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* (1942; reprint Bombay, 1956), pp. 63-68 and James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, Vol. 2 (1876; reprint New Delhi, 1972), pp. 247-251.

<sup>35</sup> For a discussion about gardens built in India by Babur, see Gavin Hambly, *Cities of Mughul India: Delhi Agra and Fatehpur Sikri* (London: Elek, 1968), pp. 28-39 and Catherine B. Asher, "Babur and the Timurid Char Bagh," *Environmental Design* No. 1 and 2, pp. 46-55.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen P. Blake, "Cityscape of an Imperial Capital: Shahjahanabad in 1739" in Frykenberg (ed.) *Delhi through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 152-155.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 154.

<sup>38</sup> The village of Chiragh-Delhi grew up slowly around the Tomb of Nasiru'd-Din Mahmud entitled '*Raushan Chiragh-i-Dili*' (illuminated lamp of Delhi), disciple of Hazrat Nizamu'd-Din whom he also succeeded as head of the Chishti sect. He died in 1356. The village was enclosed earlier within a large rubble-built rectangular enclosure with a gateway on each side, by Muhammad Bin Tughluq. The tomb consists of a twelve-pillared square chamber, enclosed within perforated screens and surmounted by a plastered dome rising from an octagonal drum, with small domed turrets at the four corners. It has been renovated, decorated and provided with several halls and mosques. One was built by King Farrukhsiyar (1713-19). There exists also numerous tombs and graves inside the enclosure of the dargah.

<sup>39</sup> Gavin Hambly, *Cities of Mughul India: Delhi, Agra & Fatehpur Sikri* (London: Elek, 1968), p. 54.

<sup>40</sup> For a discussion about how the tomb was linguistically referred to by the historic chronicles, see Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology: Collected essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 169-171.

<sup>41</sup> Most of the early Mughal visits are poorly recorded by the court memoirs; however, basic information can be inferred from those records. Shahjahan onwards, the official records are well detailed.

<sup>42</sup> Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology: Collected essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 164.

<sup>43</sup> Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. A.S. Beveridge (rpt. New Delhi, 1970), pp. 475-6. Quoted in Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology: Collected essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 164-5.

<sup>44</sup> Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi, *Zafarnama*, Trans. H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *The History Of India As Told By Its Own Historians* (rpt. Lahore, 1976), III, pp. 502-4. These are some of Delhi's historic cities, established by previous Islamic Empires during the twelfth to fifteenth centuries.

<sup>45</sup> *Akbarnama*, III, text, p. 228, trans., p. 322. Quoted in Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology: Collected essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 169.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.169.

<sup>47</sup> Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology: Collected essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 169. Koch has also inserted the phrases in brackets into Rogers's translation of the original Persian text Tuzuk.

<sup>48</sup> *Jannat Ashiyani* means 'His majesty nestling in Paradise'. This phrase can be considered symbolic of the physical layout of the tomb in its elaborate garden setting.

<sup>49</sup> Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology: Collected essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.169-70. Koch has discussed in detail the nature and dates of Jahangir's recorded visits to Delhi during his reign.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 170-1.

<sup>51</sup> For details about the exact choice of site refer Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 130-134.

<sup>52</sup> "*The monuments of these ruined cities are in themselves eloquent and teach us the highest moral lessons*". *A'in-I-Akbari*, II, trans., p. 284. Abu'l Fazl talks about the city of Delhi of Humayun and Sher Shah as being for the most in ruins with only the cemeteries being populous.

<sup>53</sup> Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, Collected essays (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 170-1.

<sup>54</sup> This importance of the dargah that reduced gradually after the reign of Akbar was restored in later years. It became a site for the dynastic burial of the Mughals once they had stopped building monumental dynastic mausoleums.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Inclusion in the Canon of 'Indian Heritage'**

This chapter deals with the history of Humayun's Tomb during the late nineteenth - early twentieth century. This period in history of Delhi was marked by the Mutiny of 1857, the formalization of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) as the colonial institution in charge of India's historic buildings and remains in 1881, and the construction of the new Imperial capitol at Raisina Hills in 1911. This is also the time when Humayun's Tomb was brought under the aegis of the ASI through a formal process of intervention for its restoration and preservation.

The tomb had become a dynastic icon of the Mughal Empire in the early seventeenth century. This status gradually eroded away over the next hundred and fifty years and the tomb became a protected monument under the ASI as part of Indian heritage in the early part of the twentieth century. This chapter looks at the prevailing condition of the tomb during the nineteenth century, analyzing the changes before and after the establishment of the British as the official colonial rulers of India in 1858.

The developing field of archaeology in India under the British aegis, and the basic principles guiding the interventions of the ASI during the nineteenth century have been studied next. The specifics of intervention for Humayun's Tomb after its enlisting under the patrimony of the ASI during the first quarter of the twentieth century and the resulting change was an important event in the history of the tomb. An analysis of the manner in which the history of the tomb was constructed and projected in the research done by British scholars and the ASI during that time is also included. These observations have been articulated to reconstruct the popular themes about the tomb during this period.



#### 4.1 A FORGOTTEN DYNASTIC ICON

Between late-seventeenth century and the inception of British administration for Humayun's Tomb in late nineteenth century, there had been a decrease in its importance as a dynastic and spiritual centre. The accompanying decrepitude of the complex can be attributed to the absence of a *waqf*.<sup>1</sup> Since the tomb was housed in a sizeable complex with large gardens, it required a number of people for its maintenance. Initially, a number of activities were also performed within the tomb, in keeping with the established tradition for sites of spiritual significance. These activities, performed in honor of Humayun, served to symbolically maintain the sanctity of the shrine.<sup>2</sup>

The matter of the tomb's maintenance remains unclear from Akbar's court chronicles and other historic texts. The *mutawalli*<sup>3</sup> performing the tasks in the tomb suggests the presence of a waqf, though there is no mention of the same and it was perhaps an informal designation. Historic sources confirm that Haji Begum was made the caretaker of the tomb upon her return from her second *hajj* in 1580.<sup>4</sup> Her tasks were overseeing the maintenance of the tomb and distribution of money to needy people. After her death, there seem to have been other caretakers, some of them appointed by Akbar.

The importance accorded to the site in imperial visits and texts diminished steadily after Akbar's death in 1605. However, it may be assumed that there was some arrangement that enabled the maintenance and preparation for occasional royal visits by later Mughal rulers like Jahangir and Shahjahan. These visits, confined to the first half of the seventeenth century, were marked by the distribution of alms to the needy and maintenance money to the caretakers.<sup>5</sup> Records also confirm the burial of more members of the Mughal royal family at the tomb during late seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> However, from 1767 until the end of the Mughal Empire in 1858, there are almost no records about the tomb.

This lack of record is evidence of the severance of the tomb from the political and spiritual importance accorded to it earlier by the Mughals. When the British took over Shahjahanabad after the Mutiny of 1857, the tomb located in an uninhabited area far outside the city had been forgotten again. The ritual of imperial visits had died out more than a century ago during ShahJahan's reign and subsequent Mughal emperors had not attempted to revive the tradition. Due to the lack of imperial patronage and monetary support at the tomb, the caretakers had gradually moved out, leaving the tomb complex not only neglected but also desolate. That subsequent Mughal royal family members were buried in Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* instead of Humayun's Tomb is indicative of the accompanying decrease in spiritual importance of the tomb.

The isolation of the tomb from its Mughal connection manifested itself at two levels. The first one is of physical deterioration; the untended gardens and water channels had disappeared under years of accumulated debris and trees had overgrown to block visual access to the tomb from outside the complex.<sup>7</sup> Only one of the four wells used to supply water to the gardens and water channels was functional and being used for irrigation of nearby farmlands.<sup>8</sup> At the symbolic level, there was very little, if any, public knowledge or interest in the spiritual associations attributed to it a century ago. The proximity of Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah*, frequented by pilgrims and tourists did nothing to incite popular interest in Humayun's Tomb.

Heber's visited the tomb in 1825 and recounts that there were people living both in and around the tomb.<sup>9</sup> However, these were not caretakers appointed by the royal family but local destitute people looking for shelter. In the absence of royal patronage for the tomb, the gardens were being used by the poor to cultivate wheat. There were occasional visitors, but Heber does not mention if they were aware of and drawn to the tomb's architectural beauty, historic significance or attributed *barakat*.

#### 4.1.1 INCIDENT DURING THE MUTINY OF 1857

The neglect of the tomb continued unchecked into the second half of the nineteenth century. During the mutiny of 1857, British soldiers had swarmed into Delhi. After a week of street fighting in the narrow streets and alleyways they had forced their way through to the open ground in front of the Red Fort (Fig.64). The city of Shahjahanabad and the Mughal Empire housed within it were under imminent threat of capture. Humayun's Tomb was so derelict and remote a spot that Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal Emperor, and his family escaped from the city and took refuge in its imagined safety. They were eventually found and arrested by the British army pursuing them (Fig.65), lead by William Hodson, the intelligence officer for the British force who had been detailed to arrest Bahadur Shah. It is reported that he took his squadron out to Humayun's Tomb, arrested the old man, promised him his life but threatened to shoot him out of hand if there were any attempt at rescue.

*"... picture the scene before the magnificent gateway, with the milk-white dome of the tomb towering up from within, one white man among a host of natives, determined to secure his prisoner or perish in the attempt."*<sup>10</sup>

The palanquins carrying the king and his party moved at a slow pace and Hodson's soldiers were vastly outnumbered by the crowd that came to watch the mournful procession back to Red Fort. The following day Hodson rode back to the tomb and arrested the king's three sons, Mizra Moghul, Mizra Khizr Sultan and Mizra Abu Bakr. On his way back, he murdered them, contrary to his promise.<sup>11</sup> The bodies of the three princes were dumped outside the city in an alley. This event symbolically marked the end of the Mughal dynasty and its connection to Humayun's Tomb. The mutiny was quelled in 1858 and India's administration as a colony officially passed into the control of the British Crown. Bahadur Shah was tried and exiled to Rangoon where

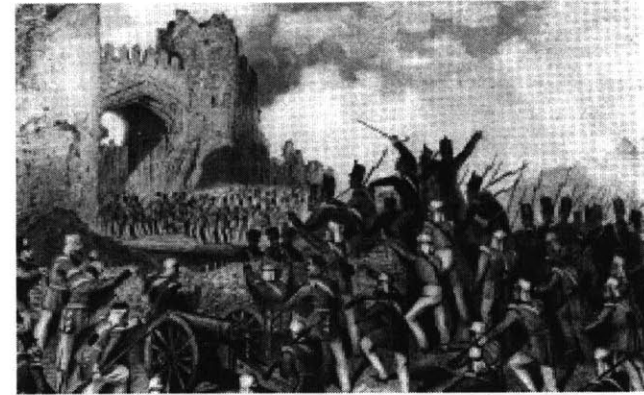


Fig.64. The Red Fort under seige during the Mutiny of 1857 (sketch).



Fig.65. Surrender by the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, to Captain Hodson at Humayun's Tomb in 1857 (sketch).



Fig.66. View of the desolate Chandni Chowk after the Mutiny.



Fig.67. View of Humayun's Tomb with ruins in its desolate surroundings in late nineteenth century Delhi. (Sketch)

he died four years later. The tomb slipped back into anonymity after this incident. Once the British took control over Mughal Delhi, the administration of Humayun's Tomb passed into the hands of the local administration.<sup>12</sup> However, there was no immediate effect of these catastrophic events and the change in administration on the physical condition of the tomb or its popularity. Located on the outskirts of the city, it remained neglected (Fig.67).

#### 4.2 A COLONIAL PATRIMONY FOR THE TOMB

The new British government established in Shahjahanabad was still grappling with the after effects of the mutiny of 1857. Most of the residents had fled, leaving the city relatively deserted (Fig.66). It took a long time, but people and trade slowly started returning to the city over the next two decades.<sup>13</sup> In such a scenario, it is not surprising that there was no one in the government specifically designated for the upkeep of the numerous monuments in the city. Humayun's Tomb, like Delhi's other monuments, continued to exist neglected in the absence of a dedicated organizational setup in charge of their upkeep (Fig.67).

The Archaeological Survey of India was officially designated as the institution responsible for the conservation of Indian Monuments in 1881, about two decades after it had been institutionalized.<sup>14</sup> Within the ASI the, a curator of ancient monuments was assigned responsibility for the purpose.<sup>15</sup> However, the ASI undertook this appointment only for three years, following which in 1884 all of Delhi's monuments were handed back into the hands of the local administration in Delhi. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the ASI resumed the control of all historic buildings in India, including Humayun's Tomb. In 1902, the state archaeological apparatus underwent much elaboration and centralization under the *Viceroy of India*, Lord Curzon, and the new *Director General of the ASI*, John Marshall.<sup>16</sup> Lord Curzon

was a self proclaimed protector of Indian antiquities as is obvious in the following words- 'it is equally our duty to dig and discover, to classify, reproduce and describe, to copy and decipher, and to cherish and conserve'.<sup>17</sup> Curzon's special concern is also evident in the nature of large restoration and preservation projects undertaken under his vision for Indian Archaeology and for the ASI.<sup>18</sup> The ASI also formulated a policy on conservation under his guidance, and began a formal process of restoration of all the monuments under its patrimony.<sup>19</sup> Since then, the agency has been responsible for the documentation, maintenance and conservation of Indian historic buildings. This legacy of the institution continues on into the twenty first century, with the ASI still operating as the official custodian of India's historic buildings and remains.

#### **4.2.1 ROLE OF THE ASI - RECONSTRUCTING INDIA'S PAST**

This section analyses the developing discipline of archaeology in India during the nineteenth century under the British colonial rule and the subsequent setting up of the ASI. A brief look at the institution is critical to understand how it influenced the way Humayun's Tomb, like other discovered monuments, was constructed for local perception of 'Indian heritage'. This section explores the inclusion of the tomb as part of the extensive knowledge producing apparatus of the ASI.

The archaeological developments in India cannot be examined in isolation from the global scenario at that time. The museums in Europe were focused on generating a system of typological hierarchies and its representation through archaeological finds. Their intention was to transform the treasures and curiosities of antiquity into sources generating information about the past; knowledge that would contribute in the establishment of a chronology for the past. Historic objects were considered the vehicles of this information - tools that would help create the most authentic representations of the past. Gradually museum collections assumed the role of ordered

and complete representations of the past; transforming the displays into organized knowledge ready for consumption by the 'initiated and uninitiated' viewer alike.<sup>20</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century, these treasure troves of antiquity were giving way to on site displays of monuments. This was done to retain contextual information pertinent to a better understanding of the built structure or its ruins. Archaeology in India during the nineteenth century was also undergoing similar developments under the British colonial aegis.

The frontrunner in this process of development in India was the institution of the National Museum, the intent of which was to collect the 'curiosities and antiquities' of India under a single roof and organize them into a codified system of knowledge. The starting point of this institution is attributed to Sir William Jones's *Asiatic Society* founded in Calcutta in 1784. His intention to set up a museum within the society had been to put it on a firmer institutional footing.<sup>21</sup> The founding principles of the museum were initially centered on collecting and not display and it was intended only for a small select circle of people who were acquainted with their 'significance' and appreciated their 'value'. The surveys undertaken during late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were mostly under governmental aegis and their specific intention was to unravel India's natural resources to enable better imperial exploitation. However, surveys in late nineteenth century began to be undertaken to supplement the growing corpus of scientific knowledge about India with information about its people, their history and culture.<sup>22</sup> Discovered antiquities had remained largely un-deciphered and India's past had not yet been reconstructed from them.

The establishment of the ASI in 1861<sup>23</sup> institutionalized the growing interest in the archaeological remains of the country. Under Lord Cunningham's guidance of ASI as its first Director General, the process of discovery and documentation was

formalized as a rigorous discipline and consequently, most of Indian built heritage was re-discovered through surveys. With time, the focus moved to conservation of the buildings as against their mere exploration and documentation. James Fergusson made the pioneering contribution to these interests with his work in the field of archaeological exploration and architectural conservation between 1835 and 1842. He opened up the new field of 'Indian architecture' with investigation, documentation and representation within an organized history guiding the process of archaeology as a discipline.<sup>24</sup>

Based on archaeological and historic scholarship of the time, India's material remains were organized within a framework – buildings and relics were classified stylistically like 'Buddhist, Islamic or Hindu'. The rediscovered artifacts were made to stand as historic evidence, their reference substantiated the creation of a whole system of knowledge about ethnography, heritage, culture etc. associated with that time; they became the 'source for revealing legend and history in addition to constituting both art and history.' Within the larger stylistic classifications, specific examples were identified as paradigms of that type. Sub-groups were made to these larger classifications on the basis of dynastic labels.<sup>25</sup> The ASI remained at the centre of these activities; its critical role was in staging these remains and buildings through a process of visual representation of knowledge as part of the unified history of India.

Archaeological remains were often carted off to museums so that they could be studied and researched through closer inspection. This process of being able to remove finds and their subsequent organization and display in museums was part of the developing system of archaeology.<sup>26</sup> But the initiative to retain monuments in situ so as not to de-contextualize them was a new development. This drive, initiated by Fergusson during the second half of the nineteenth century was aided by the



Fig.68. Condition of Humayun's Tomb Complex when it was acquired by the ASI for restoration.

development of photography as a tool to assist in documentation.<sup>27</sup> This development marks the arrival of the idea of architectural conservation as an offshoot to mainstream archaeology. A dedicated branch of the ASI was set up for the restoration and preservation of India's historic built legacy. Historic buildings and sites began to be retained as open-air museums and the ASI organized them as visual displays of information supplemented by contextual information of site. Humayun's Tomb was also eventually mapped in this distribution of open-air museums of Indian heritage.

#### 4.2.2 RESTORATION BY THE ASI

Humayun's Tomb Complex including its gardens, subsidiary structures and adjoining monuments were acquired by the ASI in the last decade of the nineteenth century for preservation (Fig.68). While the tomb had survived without any structural damage and was not in need of physical intervention, the gardens were completely overhauled; the debris in the site was cleared, the water channels and pools were excavated and restored in a number of interventions from 1903-1916.<sup>28</sup> In the absence of detailed records or drawings about the gardens, they were restored in accordance with the limited data available from the Mughal texts and traveler accounts. The ASI filled in the gaps in the available information about the gardens and carried out the restoration based on their understanding of the assumed formal *chahar-bagh* layout.<sup>29</sup> But they also introduced new British elements into the landscape of the complex - grassy lawns, sandstone benches and towering palm, cypress and tamarind trees – elements that are not known to have had a Mughal precedent in India.<sup>30</sup>

Since there was no detailed drawing of the tomb and its garden from the time of its construction, it is believed that the layout of the four main water channels, as seen today, are authentic- only their stone was replaced. It may be a possibility that the subsidiary water channels were added by the British at this time. As part of restoration



efforts at the complex in 1919, the ASI created a significant change through the addition of a number of terraces on the eastern side. These were added to shore up the decaying enclosure walls of the complex.<sup>31</sup>

The southern gate had been the original royal entry to the tomb. This gate was closed by the ASI in 1916 and a new entrance was created through the western gate. Another significant change was instituted in the water supply for the complex. The complex had originally been self sufficient in terms of its water management. The source of water for the channels and garden had been the four wells located within the complex. Over time, three of them had either dried up or were not functional anymore due to disrepair. The ASI, during the process of restoring the gardens, connected the complex with the main water supply system of the city.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4.2.3 IMPACT OF THE INTERVENTION

Even though the tomb had lost its royal patronage and symbolic status, it was not a derelict place during the eighteenth century. The tomb, no longer a place of political or spiritual significance had a very different relation with the local people from its surrounding areas. It was a shelter for the poor, a place for prayer, a place for the needy to beg for alms from people visiting the dargah and a *madrassa*.<sup>33</sup> The acquisition of the tomb by the ASI was followed by the eviction of its dwellers, and a restriction on the entry of visitors while restoration was underway.

Humayun's Tomb had also been the venue for the celebrations of *Muharram*<sup>34</sup> and *Basanti*<sup>35</sup> during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The Mughal princes were the chief guests at this event. Other events tied in with the tomb were the twice-yearly *urs* held at Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* that attracted over two thousand visitors from the city and outside. One of the events was to mark the death anniversary of

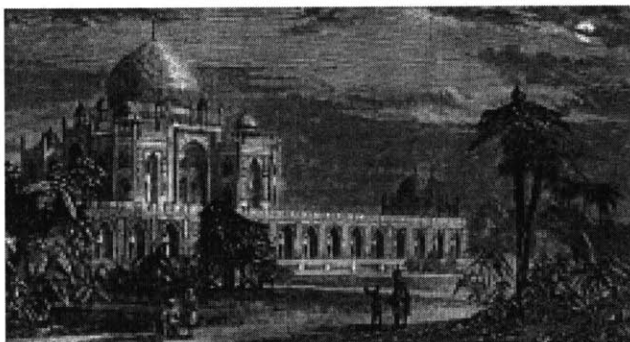


Fig.69. The restored Humayun's Tomb Complex.

Nizamuddin Auliya, while the other marked the poet Amir Khusrao's death who is buried within the dargah area). These festivals provided an economic opportunity that was exploited by the locals. They were able to use the area in Humayun's Tomb Complex to put up stalls during these festivals.<sup>36</sup> Although the tomb itself was not an active place, its proximity to the *dargah's* activities kept it within local access and use. The area around the *dargah* was densely populated and the open expanse of the complex provided an ideal location for dargah related activities to occur.

All this changed when the ASI intervened. During the long years of restoration, public access to the tomb was restricted. When the garden had been restored and the complex opened for visitor access in 1916, the tomb's physical connection to the *dargah's* activities and local people came to an end. However, the intervention by the ASI cannot be discredited. The restoration of the garden was what kept the place from falling into complete ruin (Fig.69). And their continued maintenance of the complex has contributed to its undiminished architectural beauty till now. However, the restoration of the garden and surrounding area did not do much to instigate the interest of the common man in the significance of the tomb.

The ASI was able to claim Humayun's Tomb as part of the patrimony of 'Indian heritage'. The absence of an extant *waqf* made the acquisition of the complex and the subsequent physical intervention by the ASI a simple matter. These changes symbolically announced the ASI, and indirectly the British, as caretakers of the monument. The idea of the museum and open-air displays of monuments was a showcase for colonial patrimony. On a larger scale, these acts of restoration and preservation of 'Indian Heritage' undertaken for the benefit of the 'Indian people' were critical to establishing the cultural, economic and political hegemony of the British as legitimate colonizers.

### 4.3 HUMAYUN'S TOMB IN COLONIAL SCHOLARSHIP

This section analyzes how scholars during late nineteenth-early twentieth century were reconstructing the history of Humayun's Tomb. Three texts from that time have been chosen for this purpose- James Fergusson-*History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, Vol. 2 (1876), Percy Brown-*Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* (1942) and E. B. Havell-*Indian Architecture: its Psychology, Structure and History from the first Mohammedan Invasion to the Present Day* (1927). Key among these scholars is Fergusson, who made a significant contribution to the field of archaeological practices in India during the initial years of the ASI.<sup>37</sup> That these three works are representative of the research done about Indian historic buildings at that time is substantiated by the reference made to them in most contemporary research about the formal aspects of Indian historic buildings.

The introduction to Mughal architecture in India is usually made with a reference to Babur and the lack of extant architecture built by him. Humayun is mentioned in context with Din Panah along with remarks about the brevity and instability of his rule. Havell introduces them with the following statement "Since nothing of importance now remains of Babur's buildings, we must continue the review of sixteenth century architecture with the Mosque and tomb of Sher Shah, an Afghan Noble who had submitted to Babur, but revolted against his weak son Humayun and drove him into exile in Persia."<sup>38</sup> It creates an image about Humayun's personality as that of a hapless and unlucky ruler, whose brief reign was fraught with political turmoil. This image is found repeatedly juxtaposed against the glories of Akbar's rule.

In the matter of the architectural style of Humayun's Tomb, Havell attributes it to the influence of the Persian army accompanying Humayun in 1555. He describes the tomb as a Persian version of Sher Shah's tomb at Sassaram. Throughout his discussion about the formal aspects of Humayun's Tomb, he stresses on the Indian provenance

of the idea for its layout rather than a Persian one, and draws parallels about its architectural elements either with Sher Shah's tomb or Taj Mahal.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, Brown attributes the architectural scheme to be of 'Persian origin built under an Indian influence'. He also points out that the garden setting for Humayun's Tomb was not unprecedented but a development in the sequence from earlier imperial tombs—the tradition of setting a tomb within a well-defined enclosure as witnessed previously in the Lodi tombs.<sup>40</sup> While Havell argues that the Tomb of Sher Shah was superior to Humayun's Tomb in the articulation of features as well as in overall impact, Fergusson's arguments are exactly the opposite in claiming that Humayun's Tomb was a better and advanced stage of the imperial tomb typology.<sup>41</sup>

In the matter of discussing the overall visual impact and appeal of the building, Havell attributes Humayun's Tomb with "a certain coldness and poverty in the design," stating that even while being grand, it is "pompous and self-conscious - an attribute of Persian influence."<sup>42</sup> He ends his assessment of the tomb stating that "the visual impact of the building was neither pleasing nor popular."<sup>43</sup> Fergusson also maintains that the tomb's "purity- poverty of design is unlike anything else built by Akbar, and is not even picturesque."<sup>44</sup> Brown, on the other hand, praises Humayun's Tomb for its overall architectural merit as well as a building of consequence to the development of Mughal architecture in India.<sup>45</sup> However, he refrains from making architectural parallels to Taj Mahal, unlike his other counterparts.

Of the three, only Brown has elaborated the aspect of patronage, attributing it to Haji Begum. It is interesting to note that he does so simply by inference; he does not allude to any written records to back his assumption but supports it by drawing a parallel to the romantic notions surrounding Taj Mahal's patronage (discussed in chapter 3).<sup>46</sup> Fergusson attributes the inception of Humayun's Tomb to his wife and its overall

execution to Akbar's patronage.<sup>47</sup> Havell does not link the tomb to any patron, choosing to discuss it as an isolated structure outside the development of the tomb typology and Mughal architecture, but for Taj Mahal.<sup>48</sup>

A few observations can be made based on this study. It becomes obvious that these scholars, belonging to the British colonial system, did not have recourse to the original Arabic/ Persian texts from the time of Humayun's Tomb or their translations. This factor contributes to their conflicting assumptions and arguments about the date of construction as well as patronage of Humayun's Tomb. This was complicated further by the lack of inscriptions and epigraphy on the tomb structure itself- forcing the scholars to rely on secondary sources of information.

Another aspect brought out by this analysis is that in spite of its obvious grand scale, the building is accorded less importance than most other structures built by Akbar. Its nature of aesthetic articulation was usually found lacking, juxtaposed against the visually appealing and more popular Taj (Fig.70). The matter of popular perception of Humayun's Tomb is where the three scholars have divergent opinions - ranging from 'stark' to 'a masterpiece of Mughal architecture'.

These opinions indicate that the academic world at that time was undecided about the tomb and its typological classification. Given the predilection of the ASI to act as a knowledge generating system using historic structures as its apparatus, it comes as no surprise that this building was a cause of confusion. The lack of information and consensus about its relevance as an individual tomb and to the development of Mughal architecture in India was problematic. However, in the aspect of its typological link to the Taj, there was always a unanimous voice.

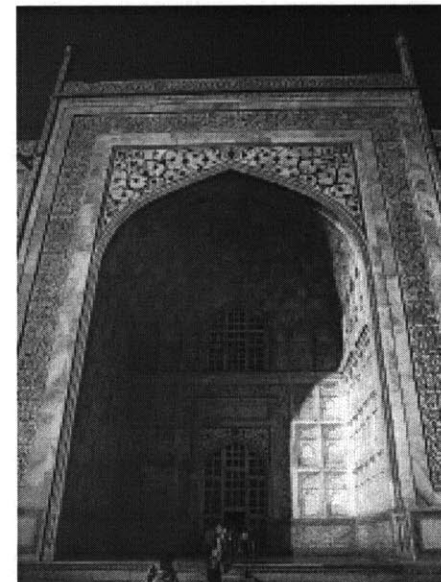


Fig.70. The Taj Mahal.

#### 4.3.1 THE TOMB'S DESIGNATION AS 'INDIAN HERITAGE'

As discussed before, while the primary objective of the interventions by the ASI was to preserve historic buildings and remains, these efforts were also prompted by the underlying intention to transform Indian antiquities (monuments, relics, manuscripts etc.) into sources generating information; knowledge that would contribute in the establishment of a chronological and 'authentic' Indian past.<sup>49</sup> Within the larger category of Islamic monuments and buildings, scholars had already created sub-groups on the basis of dynastic labels. While Taj Mahal was designated as the paradigm of Mughal tomb-type, Humayun's Tomb was relegated to the status of its prototype. This designation was influenced by how the tomb was written about in the texts of that time, contributing to the construction of its image in the public mind.

*Humayun's Tomb was an episode in Indian architectural history which, but for the great dimensions of the building and for its interest as one of the connecting links in the evolution of the Taj mahal, might well be passed over*<sup>50</sup>.

**E. B. Havell**

The process of claiming the tomb as part of the ASI's patrimony marks its inclusion into the canon of scholarship during late nineteenth early twentieth century. However, while the Taj was able to complement this eclectic classification with a sustained public interest, Humayun's Tomb continued to remain in virtual isolation in spite of being part of the larger display of 'Indian Heritage'<sup>51</sup> that was being consumed by the local and colonial people. This can be attributed in part to the manner in which it was projected by the scholarship around Indian historic buildings at that time.

*"purity- poverty of design is unlike anything else built by Akbar, and is not even picturesque."*<sup>52</sup>

*"...a certain coldness and poverty in the design,"*<sup>53</sup>

The inclusion and projection of Humayun's Tomb in the scholarship of that time, as the primary force shaping its popular perception as a 'prototype of the Taj' and an 'unimportant episode in Mughal architecture' is critical. These impressions became pervasive and prevented it from becoming a popular example of Indian heritage. The community that exercised the power to define its identity for display as 'heritage' as well as its representation in scholarship was not the same community that was meant to consume this representation of the tomb as heritage. This distinction between the colonizers as the hegemonic controllers and the colonized as the audience widened the gap between the construction and consumption of Humayun's Tomb as 'Indian heritage'. Since the rituals and memories associated with the tomb had been dead for more than a century, the canonization of the tomb further divorced it from its past and it became museumised as a singular object without any contextual associations, a condition that was perpetuated into post independence India due to a complex set of factors discussed in the next chapter.

#### **4.3.2 ESTABLISHING LINKS WITH THE 'MUGHAL PAST'**

Within the classification system developed under the British archaeological exploration of 'India's Past' during the nineteenth century, a few types had been highlighted as the hallmarks of 'Indian Civilization'- 'Indo-Islamic' architecture was one of them. Within the more recent Mughal past of the country, Akbar's architecture was designated superior to that from other Islamic building traditions. This stemmed from the belief, common in most colonial scholarship of the time, that Akbar, when he built Fatehpur Sikri, Agra Fort and his own mausoleum at Sikandra, had self consciously dealt with the articulation of elements labeled Muslim and Hindu in order to create for his own political purposes a synthesis or syncretism, of the two religions.<sup>54</sup> While it is true that Akbar rooted his architecture in the tradition of existing regional styles, it was simply to associate his reign with the glories of past kingdoms by stylistic emulation and an

appropriation of their architecture. The colonial scholarship, on the other hand, labeled this as his attempt to build a secular architecture, implying that there existed at that time two distinct groups of Hindu and Islamic architecture without overlaps that Akbar fused seamlessly in his buildings.<sup>55</sup>

This academic theme operated parallel to another political one during that period. Akbar was credited with some unprecedented developments in the realm of policies of state introduced during his reign.<sup>56</sup> The British projected these changes as the first attempt by an 'outsider' to establish a society of political and religious 'tolerance'. While the primary objective of this scholarship was to promote the re-construction of India's past from its historic buildings and remains, these representations also served the British colonial interests. The image of Akbar as the legitimate 'outsider' to India, whose rule saw unprecedented development and glory for India, could be portrayed in parallel to the British colonization of India. The British found it in their interests to forge a symbolic connection to that particular Indian past under Akbar's rule in order to legitimize their presence in India as 'outsiders'- colonial rulers. This connection was achieved in part by their 'discovery', restoration and appreciation of India's Mughal past as manifest in the historic architecture of that time. Humayun's Tomb, with its fusion of designated Islamic and Hindu elements,<sup>57</sup> fell into this category.

This attempt to associate with the Mughal past of India (especially Akbar's rule) also becomes evident in the British colonial architecture from late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries. In the appropriation of Indian styles of building as well as in the conservation of Indian built heritage, the British saw an opportunity to affirm their legitimacy as rulers.<sup>58</sup> William Emerson, the foremost designer of Saracenic structures in India said, 'the British should follow the example of those whom they had supplanted as conquerors, the Mughals, who had seized upon the art indigenous to the countries



they conquered, adapting it to suit their own needs and ideas. Lord Napier, Governor of Madras, in 1870, argued that the Indian Government should 'consider whether the *Mussalman*<sup>59</sup> form might not be adopted generally as the official style of architecture.'<sup>60</sup>

#### 4.4 HUMAYUN'S TOMB AS MUSEUMISED 'HERITAGE'

The most significant outcome of the scholarship centered on India's historic buildings and remains during the colonial period, for Humayun's Tomb, was the collection of the architectural details about it. Most of the academic interest however, was due to its designation as the architectural prototype to the Taj Mahal in Agra, regarded by the Europeans as the highest architectural achievement in India.<sup>61</sup> The outcome of the restoration and preservation effort by the ASI during this time was significant as it helped re-discover India's lost past and prevented the loss of some important structures through ruin. In the case of Humayun's Tomb, it helped restore the gardens and prevented further degeneration of the tomb, subsidiary structures and their environs. At a symbolic level, the efforts of the ASI as a colonial institution, allowed the British to claim legitimacy of colonial hegemony as the official caretakers of 'Indian heritage'.<sup>62</sup>

In terms of political significance, the new imperial capital at Raisina Hills was the center of urban attention, followed by the old city of Shahjahanabad (Fig.71). Hence, Humayun's Tomb was still isolated from the city, located at the outskirts of colonial Delhi. Additionally, India was undergoing the turmoil of an independence struggle during the first half of the twentieth century. While the more important and popular historic buildings were projected as heritage to substantiate new emerging concepts of nationalism, attention to insignificant historic buildings like Humayun's Tomb was meagre.<sup>63</sup> The former developed into tourist attractions by being claimed and consumed as heritage by the state and local public while Humayun's Tomb never made that critical transition.

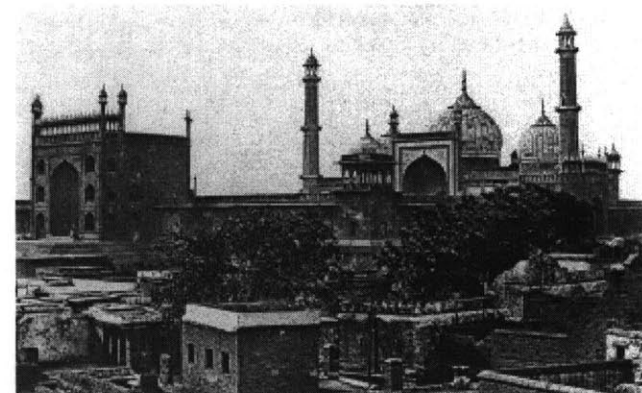


Fig.71. View of Shahjahanabad as the focus of urban life in Delhi. The Jama Masjid is visible in the background.

The perception of the tomb operated at the two extremes of the academic and the popular. While the tomb held significance as the architectural prototype of Taj Mahal for the former, it was merely an old insignificant tomb for the latter in the absence of its historic significance and meanings. Amidst the confusion of fading memories of the Mughal past, the British imperial presence and newly emerging national consciousness, the tomb remained a virtual island of the past- eliciting little public interest.

NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> *Waqf* is an Islamic *charitable endowment often intended for the upkeep of a religious building, educational establishment or hospital.*

<sup>2</sup> The tradition of such activities is the hallmark of the tombs of *sufis* and other holy people, believed to part of maintaining sanctity at the site.

<sup>3</sup> While effecting a *waqf* one can appoint himself, or any person of his choice, as administrator of that *waqf* who takes care of its management and carries out its day-to-day affairs conforming to the conditions of the *waqf*. This administrator is called "*mutawalli*".

<sup>4</sup> Haji Begum's returned from her second *hajj* and was subsequently appointment as *mutawalli* for Humayun's Tomb. Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 140-141.

<sup>5</sup> See "Humayun's Tomb and Mughal Imperial Visits" in Chapter 3 for the chronology and account of Mughal imperial visits to Humayun's Tomb.

<sup>6</sup> Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 142-151.

<sup>7</sup> This condition of the tomb is made evident by sketches and drawings of the tomb and its surroundings from that period. See associated images.

<sup>8</sup> Heber, *Bishop Heber in Northern India: Selections from Heber's Journal*, p. 227.

<sup>9</sup> Heber's account of his travels in 1825 is quoted in Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 154.

<sup>10</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, March 20 1858, <<http://www.harappa.com/engr/humayun.html>> (11 May 2003).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India* (Calcutta: Government of India, 1903), p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Narayani Gupta, *Delhi between two empires 1803-1931: Society, Government and Urban Growth* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981).

<sup>14</sup> Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "Tales of the Bharhut Stupa: Archaeology in the Colonial and Nationalist Imaginations," *Paradigms of Indian architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, (ed.) G. H. R. Tillotson (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1998), p. 28.

<sup>15</sup> In 1861 Alexander Cunningham was appointed to undertake a systematic survey of monuments, and in 1873 the Central Government entrusted the work of preservation of historic monuments to the local governments but established the ASI in 1902 to centralize the work under John Marshall.

<sup>16</sup> The Ancient Monuments Preservation Act was passed in 1904 that gave the ASI added powers as an institution. Its current successor the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act was passed in 1958. for details about the development of the ASI from a colonial to post colonial institution, see H. Sarkar, *Museums and Protection of Monuments and Antiquities in India* (Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 1981), pp. 1-48.

- <sup>17</sup> Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "Tales of the Bharhut Stupa: Archaeology in the Colonial and Nationalist Imaginations," *Paradigms of Indian architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, (ed.) G. H. R. Tillotson (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1998), p. 44.
- <sup>18</sup> George Nathaniel Curzon, *Lord Curzon in India* (London, New York: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1906).
- <sup>19</sup> N.L. Batra, *Heritage Conservation: Preservation and Restoration of Monuments* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 1996), pp.75-90.
- <sup>20</sup> The workings of the ASI as an institution engaged in establishing archaeology, is a development that can be better understood from the parallel European trend traced in Alain Schnapp, *The Discovery Of The Past* (Harry N Abrams Inc.: New York, 1996), pp. 274-315.
- <sup>21</sup> Tapati Guha Thakurta, "The Museumised Relic: Archaeology and the First Museum Of Colonial India", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 34, 1 (New Delhi: SAGE, 1997), pp. 24-36 and Nancy G. Cassels (ed.), *Orientalism, evangelicalism and the military cantonment in early nineteenth-century India: A Historiographical Overview* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), pp. 48-50.
- <sup>22</sup> H. Sarkar, *Museums and Protection of Monuments and Antiquities in India* (Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 1981), pp. 27-30.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- <sup>24</sup> Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "Tales of the Bharhut Stupa: Archaeology in the Colonial and Nationalist Imaginations," *Paradigms of Indian architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, (ed.) G. H. R. Tillotson (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1998), p. 28.
- <sup>25</sup> Tapati Guha Thakurta, "The Museumised Relic: Archaeology and the First Museum Of Colonial India", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 34, 1 (New Delhi: SAGE, 1997), p. 41.
- <sup>26</sup> Alain Schnapp, *The Discovery Of The Past* (Harry N Abrams Inc.: New York, 1996), pp. 274-315.
- <sup>27</sup> Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "Tales of the Bharhut Stupa: Archaeology in the Colonial and Nationalist Imaginations," *Paradigms of Indian architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, (ed.) G. H. R. Tillotson (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1998), p. 28.
- <sup>28</sup> *Annual report: Northern Circle, Superintendent of Muhammedan and British Monuments*, 1916/17.
- <sup>29</sup> The 'Mughal' authenticity of the garden restoration done by the ASI and Curzon has remained a point of unresolved debate among scholars.
- <sup>30</sup> See Gavin Hambly, *Cities of Mughul India: Delhi Agra and Fatehpur Sikri* (London: Elek, 1968), pp. 28-39 and Catherine B. Asher, "Babur and the Timurid Char Bagh," *Environmental Design* No. 1 and 2, pp. 46-55.
- <sup>31</sup> Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 21-26.
- <sup>32</sup> *Annual report: Northern Circle, Superintendent of Muhammedan and British Monuments*, 1916/17.
- <sup>33</sup> Glenn D. Lowry, "*The Tomb of Nasiruddin Mohammad Humayun*", (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), pp. 152.
- <sup>34</sup> Muharram is not a festival in the celebratory sense as it mourns the Karbala tragedy when Imam Husain, grandson of Prophet Muhammad, was martyred. It is observed in different

ways in various parts of India. Profusely decorated taziyas (bamboo and paper replicas of the martyr's tomb), embellished with gilt and mica are carried through city streets. Mourners beat their breasts lamenting and grieving, accompanied by drumbeats. Wrestlers and dancers enact scenes depicting the battle at Karbala in collective sorrow.

<sup>35</sup> Basant is the festival that heralds the beginning of spring. Kite flying, a popular sport in India, is associated with the Basant Panchami day. The day of Basant Panchami is dedicated to Goddess Sarasvati- the goddess of learning. Basant had its beginnings as a Hindu festival but over time has become a secular festival. It is considered a traditional and cultural event. In Delhi, most of the celebration is focused around the area of Nazamuddin Auliya's *dargah* even today.

<sup>36</sup> Narayani Gupta, "Delhi and its Hinterland: the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries" in Frykenberg (ed.) *Delhi through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 259.

<sup>37</sup> Tapati Guha Thakurta, "The Museumised Relic: Archaeology and the First Museum Of Colonial India", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 34, 1 (New Delhi: SAGE, 1997), pp. 27.

<sup>38</sup> E. B. Havell, *Indian architecture: its psychology, structure and history from the first Mohammedan invasion to the present day* (London: J. Murray, 1927), p. 163.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163-64.

<sup>40</sup> Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* (1942; reprint Bombay, 1956), p. 97.

<sup>41</sup> James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, Vol. 2 (1876; reprint New Delhi, 1972), p. 291.

<sup>42</sup> E. B. Havell, *Indian architecture: its psychology, structure and history from the first Mohammedan invasion to the present day* (London: J. Murray, 1927), p. 164.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>44</sup> James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, Vol. 2 (1876; reprint New Delhi, 1972), pp. 288-89.

<sup>45</sup> Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* (1942; reprint Bombay, 1956), p. 97.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>47</sup> James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, Vol. 2 (1876; reprint New Delhi, 1972), pp. 288-89.

<sup>48</sup> E. B. Havell, *Indian architecture: its psychology, structure and history from the first Mohammedan invasion to the present day* (London: J. Murray, 1927), pp. 164-65.

<sup>49</sup> The workings of the National Museum and ASI as the institutions engaged in the establishment of archaeology as a formal institution, aided by the construction of the 'typology' tool for classification of objects, is a development that can be understood from Tapati Guha Thakurta, "The Museumised Relic: Archaeology and the First Museum Of Colonial India", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 34, 1 (New Delhi: SAGE, 1997), p. 26-34.

<sup>50</sup> E. B. Havell, *Indian Architecture: its Psychology, Structure and History from the first Mohammedan Invasion to the Present Day* (London: J. Murray, 1927), p. 165.

- <sup>51</sup> Tapati Guha Thakurta, "The Museumised Relic: Archaeology and the First Museum Of Colonial India", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 34, 1 (New Delhi: SAGE, 1997), pp. 30-35. Monuments were organized as open displays of India's heritage. Most of India's historic architecture was eventually mapped in this format for its consumption as heritage.
- <sup>52</sup> James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, Vol. 2 (1876; reprint New Delhi, 1972), pp. 288-89.
- <sup>53</sup> E. B. Havell, *Indian architecture: its psychology, structure and history from the first Mohammedan invasion to the present day* (London: J. Murray, 1927), p. 164.
- <sup>54</sup> Thomas R. Metcalf, "Past and Present: Towards and Aesthetics of Colonialism", *Paradigms of Indian architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, (ed.) G. H. R. Tillotson (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1998), pp. 13-14.
- <sup>55</sup> E. B. Havell, *Indian architecture: its Psychology, Structure and History from the first Mohammedan Invasion to the Present Day* (London: J. Murray, 1927), pp. 165-169 and James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, Vol. 2 (1876; reprint New Delhi, 1972), pp. 247-251.
- <sup>56</sup> See Chapter 3. Also see Glenn D. Lowry in "Humayun's Tomb: Form, Function, and Meaning in Early Mughal Architecture", *Muqarnas IV: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture*, Oleg Grabar (ed.), (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), p. 145.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 136-140.
- <sup>58</sup> See R.G. Irving, *Indian summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), Jan Morris, *Stones of Empire: the Buildings of the Raj* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) and Thomas R. Metcalf, *An imperial vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- <sup>59</sup> The literal meanings of the word *Mussalman* is Muslim. Here, it signifies the architecture of the various Islamic Empires in India, key among them the Mughal style.
- <sup>60</sup> Thomas R. Metcalf, "Past and Present: Towards and Aesthetics of Colonialism", *Paradigms of Indian architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, (ed.) G. H. R. Tillotson (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1998), pp. 13-14.
- <sup>61</sup> Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* (1942; reprint Bombay, 1956), pp. 115-118 and E. B. Havell, *Indian architecture: its Psychology, Structure and History from the first Mohammedan Invasion to the Present Day* (London: J. Murray, 1927), pp. 228-36.
- <sup>62</sup> For a discussion about colonial hegemony of 'heritage' under the French colonization, see Gwendolyn Wright, "Tradition in the service of modernity: architecture and urbanism in French colonial policy, 1900-1930," *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, edited by Frank Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1997), pp. 322-40.
- <sup>63</sup> See Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "Tales of the Bharhut Stupa: Archaeology in the Colonial and Nationalist Imaginations," *Paradigms of Indian architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, (ed.) G. H. R. Tillotson (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1998) about the perception of historic buildings during the early parts of the twentieth century, when the national movement in India was at a nascent stage.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**Constructing and Consuming 'Heritage'**

The time frame discussed in this chapter is late twentieth century in post-independence India. During this time, Delhi transformed from its early twentieth century designation as the colonial seat of power and trade into its late twentieth century identity as the urban capital of independent India. The first section of this chapter evaluates the set of conditions, some in perpetuation from the colonial past of the country, and others rooted in the present of the city that prevented the consumption of Humayun's Tomb as heritage in popular perception during most of the second half of the twentieth century. The designation of Humayun's Tomb as a *'World Heritage Monument'* in 1993 brought about certain ameliorating changes, helped further by the recent AKTC grant in 1997. The next part of the chapter is a discussion of how these interventions have succeeded in influencing the physical form of the tomb but still attempt to revive its popularity in its new role as internationally designated 'heritage'



Fig.72. The urban expanse of New Delhi.

### 5.1 URBAN DELHI AND A FORGOTTEN MONUMENT

Before launching into specific details about the tomb during the last quarter of the twentieth century, it is imperative to establish the changes taking place in New Delhi at that time. In the years after India's independence in 1947, the city rapidly expanded beyond its established urban boundaries due to massive refugee and rural migration. New urban networks were being setup and the city was fast gaining commercial as well as residential importance. These lead to a scarcity of resources, prime among them were land and infrastructure<sup>1</sup> (Fig.72). In such a setting, it was virtually impossible for the city's administration to siphon funds for the upkeep for the city's countless historic structures. Most had remained neglected during the years immediately before and after India's independence<sup>2</sup> due to political and administrative turmoil.<sup>3</sup> This was complicated by the lack of resources available to the ASI,<sup>4</sup> which had continued as the official caretaker of Indian historic buildings in Independent India.



The city struggled in the attempt to reconcile its present with its historic past; a past that could be perceived scattered within its vast urban sprawl in the form of innumerable historic structures (Fig.73). The larger and more noteworthy of these, like Qutub Minar and Red Fort, developed into sites of tourist interest. Smaller structures that fell within the expanding urban expanse of the city were enveloped by residential communities or commercial activities. Some of them triggered private initiative that salvaged and reintegrated them with the city's fabric; they were claimed and consumed as heritage at the local level in spite of the ASI's lack of attention and resources (Fig.74). Their easy visual and physical access from surrounding urban areas was an important factor. Others were conserved as living parts of Delhi by the city administration. For example, the integration of Lodi tombs through their incorporation into landscaped areas for Delhi that lacked public open spaces. School children and families regularly visited such sites where they experienced the architecture of the historic building and learned about its history. This helped bring these historic structures back into the realm of the city's collective memory. Some structures were less lucky and they fell prey to the pressures of urbanization.<sup>5</sup> A few of them survive as illegal settlements and slums.

### 5.1.1 REASONS FOR CONTINUING NEGLECT OF THE TOMB

Not all historic structures within the urban sprawl of New Delhi were as fortunate as the examples discussed in the previous section. Humayun's Tomb, due to its location on the outskirts of Delhi's urban core did not benefit from any such intervention and continued to remain neglected as a historic site (Fig.75). The city of Delhi, with its new administrative and commercial centre around the capitol built by the British at Raisina hills, along with the rest of its urban expanse, had developed southwards along River Yamuna instead of laterally across it. The area around the tomb did not benefit from this development, as it was full of neglected and ruinous historic structures

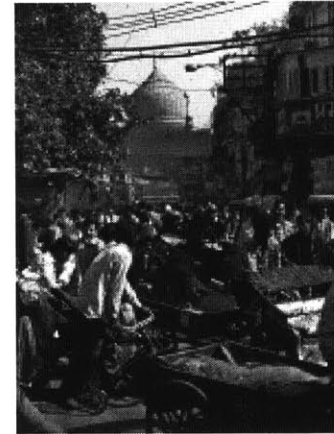


Fig.73. Jama Masjid seen amidst the confusion of Old Delhi.



Fig.74. (above) Jama Masjid used as living heritage.

Fig.75. (below) Location of tomb at the outskirts of urban Delhi.

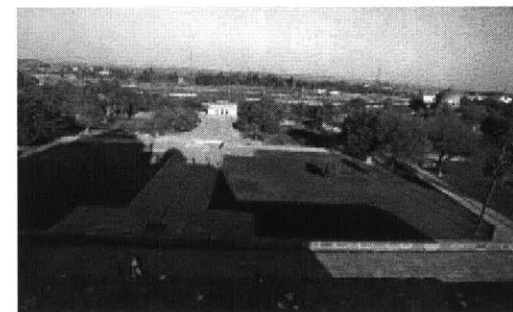




Fig.76. Commercial activity near the dargah.

that were deemed 'protected' by the ASI. This prevented urban intervention in its immediate vicinity. The tomb was reduced to a mere feature on the city skyline as a result of its isolation from its surroundings and the urban fabric of the city.

Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* had remained a favored pilgrimage spot,<sup>6</sup> while Humayun's Tomb continued to exist in relative anonymity. In the post partition era, the *dargah* had become an important cultural and religious center of a shared heritage between Hindus and Muslims.<sup>7</sup> The settlement near the *dargah* supported devotional activities and prayers for the pilgrims and locals. The tradition of celebrating Muharram, Basant and the *urs* for Nizamuddin Auliya and Amir Khusrau had also continued. All these activities encouraged commercial and residential development around the *dargah*. With the economic success of these urban ventures, the historic settlement developed into a vibrant urban community (Fig.76).

Other spiritual centers like the *Chirag-i-Dilhi* had also survived the onslaught of urban development and continued to remain favored spots for locals and tourists alike. Devotional and pilgrim activities similar to those at Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* happen here too. Such places had assumed significance in spite of the lack of support to them from the city administration in terms of maintenance and services due to their public popularity and caretakers. On the other hand, Humayun's Tomb had lost this aspect of attributed spirituality and accompanying patronage in the eighteenth century. In the absence of a popular narrative associated with it, the tomb was not a significant site for the city dweller or tourist.

For the city's administration, the area around the tomb was problematic for urban intervention. Most of the land is taken up by dilapidated tombs, mosques and their ruins (discussed in Chapter 2). Their site and surroundings are deemed protected by

the ASI. Additionally, stringent regulations need to be followed in terms of land use policies, building height restrictions etc. in such a 'protected zone' comprised of historic buildings and ruins.<sup>8</sup> This leaves very little room for urban development. The provision of services like electricity and road network to the area was also poorly developed in the absence of potential for urban development.

From a tourism perspective, the tomb did not develop much in spite of this protected status that pre-empted urban intervention in the area. The main reason was the tomb's poor maintenance by the ASI that was plagued by a serious financial crunch during its early years in independent India. To make matters worse, the organization was in charge of the maintenance of more than 3000 historic sites and structures in India.<sup>9</sup> It was perennially understaffed, short of resources and funds. It attempted to channel its resources selectively for the popular tourist sites. Humayun's Tomb and the innumerable structures around it were not perceived as important monuments or historic buildings in the popular perception. Hence, they were not considered critical to the city's tourism industry unlike the Jama Masjid, Red Fort and the Secretariat (Fig.77,78 and 79).

All these reasons contributed to the continuing neglect of the tomb by the city administration and the ASI and its isolation from the local population and tourists. Untended gardens, accumulated silt that blocked up water channels, overgrown trees that obscured the tomb and visually isolated it from its surroundings, poor vehicular and pedestrian access to the complex and inadequate lighting that made the vast deserted expanse of the gardens seem unsafe<sup>10</sup> - all these combined to create a very undesirable image of the place. This further contributed to its continuing exclusion from local and tourist itineraries, which chose to limit their 'heritage' experience in Delhi primarily to Qutub Minar, Red Fort, and Capitol complex.



Fig.77. Jama Masjid.



Fig.78. Secretariat at the Capitol, New Delhi.

Fig.79. Red Fort, Old Delhi.



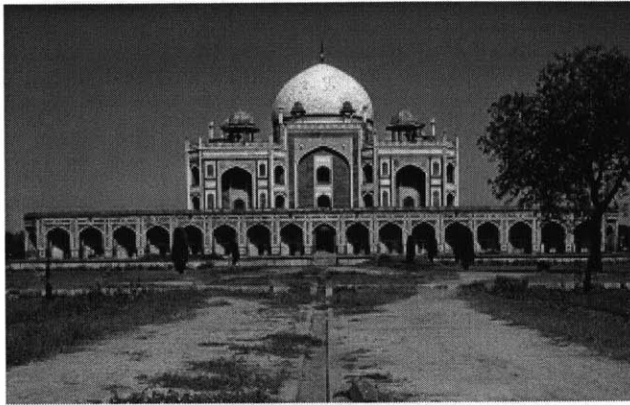


Fig.80. The neglect of Humayun's Tomb can be seen here. Broken water channels and pathways are visible in the landscape, 1982.

## 5.2 INCLUSION INTO THE PATRIMONY OF 'INTERNATIONAL HERITAGE'

The scenario of neglect highlighted in the previous section continued for more than four decades (Fig.80). In 1993, the tomb was designated a 'World Heritage Site'<sup>11</sup> through its inscription into the 'World Heritage List'. This is a listing maintained by the World Heritage Committee of the UNESCO.<sup>12</sup> Other historically significant sites in India (Taj Mahal and Ajanta Caves to name a few) had previously been inscribed on the list as early as 1983. In the intermediate period, nearly twenty other historic sites and structures from India (including two National Wildlife Parks) were added to the list. The 1993 listing also included Qutub Complex along with Humayun's Tomb. By June 2003, the listing from India included twenty-four sites.

The World Heritage Committee, UNESCO, describes its objectives as follows:

*The World Heritage Committee is working to make sure that future generations can inherit the treasures of the past. And yet, most sites face a variety of threats, particularly in today's environment. The preservation of this common heritage concerns us all.*<sup>13</sup>

A cursory glance of the listing would indicate that the qualifying reasons sited for the listing vary. They are case specific since the range of listed sites includes buildings (historic and new) as well as natural and wildlife landscapes. The existence of such a list operates on the concept that there is an inherent quality to these sites that qualifies them to be saved for posterity. This in turn is based on the assumption that there exist some qualities of the natural and man made world that would be understood and appreciated internationally as 'heritage'. Hence, in the listing of Humayun's Tomb, the underlying implication is that its physical form is representative of its values/ meanings/ history that are not only understood but also appeal to popular perception at a global level. And it is this implication that operates as the basis for projecting the tomb as an important historic building and monument.

Through this designation the ASI had recourse to technical assistance and funds from UNESCO for carrying out necessary repairs and maintenance long overdue for the tomb and its garden. Certain spatial changes were brought into immediate effect- the vehicular and pedestrian access to the tomb was rebuilt, a huge parking lot was created to cater for increased tourist traffic, new signage was installed and access to the complex was permitted till late evening hours. Flood lights were installed in the complex for safety of visitors and to light up the tomb at night. These changes along with long-term guidelines for services and management of the site,<sup>14</sup> proposed by UNESCO, were directed towards reviving public interest in the tomb as a monument and integrating it within the 'heritage map' of Delhi as a popular tourist site.

*After a site is approved for inscription into the World Heritage List, the real work of preserving and conserving it begins. Around the world conservationists are at work each day analyzing, probing, and finding solutions to protecting the rich variety of the world's cultural and natural heritage. They are joined by thousands of carpenters, stone masons, naturalists, archeologists, paleontologists and a host of others whose business it is to bring a site back to life, or keep it from dying.<sup>15</sup>*

Based on these claims, it can be argued that while the larger goals of the agency are to save 'heritage', the apparent manifestation of their interventions seek solely to promote historic sites as places of tourist import and their subsequent gentrification. In the period following its designation as a 'World Heritage Monument'(Fig.19), Humayun's Tomb was promoted as one of Delhi's top tourist sites. Gradually, the tomb became a feature on some of the city tours for locals and tourists, reviving its presence as part of the historic legacy of the city and the nation. However, it was not able to attain the same level of importance accorded to other historic sites in the city. In the realm of popular perception it has remained a second option to Qutub Minar and Red Fort.

*This tomb, built in 1570, is of cultural significance as it was the first garden-tomb on the Indian subcontinent. It inspired several major architectural innovations, culminating in the construction of the Taj Mahal.<sup>16</sup>*

This reason mentioned by the WHC for listing Humayun's Tomb as 'heritage' is further evidence of the tomb being projected merely as an architectural prototype. New tourist guides and maps made available to enable a guided physical experience of the building contributed little to an understanding about its history or significance.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the international patrimony of the WHC did little to revive the meanings associated with the tomb, perpetuating instead its typological classification in popular perception.

#### 5.2.1 INTERVENTION BY THE AKTC

The recent and much publicized grant of \$650,000 made by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) towards the restoration of the landscape of Humayun's Tomb Complex in 1997 was the next attempt to change its fate. This restoration project, the first privately funded and collaborative project undertaken by the ASI, was completed and inaugurated by the *Aga Khan*<sup>18</sup> on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2003<sup>19</sup> (Fig.81). The following excerpt from his speech highlights the 'heritage' associated with Humayun's Tomb.

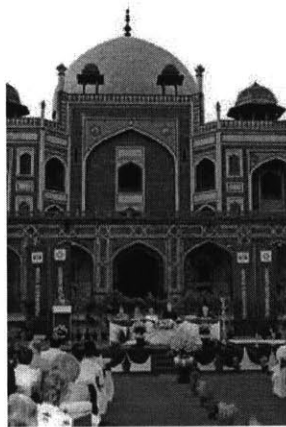


Fig.81. Inauguration ceremony of the restored landscape of Humayun's Tomb Complex, 2003.

*"... recognized in this project a symbol of Indian history and of the world's cultural heritage... The hues and scents of these gardens, the varied sources of the design elements and of the chosen construction materials, make this monument an important reminder of the power and elegance of diversity... Whether through neglect or willful destruction, the disappearance of physical traces of the past deprives us of more than memories. Spaces that embody historic realities remind us of the lessons of the past. They constitute valuable national assets but also represent the patrimony of mankind."<sup>20</sup>*

The intervention of the AKTC was primarily targeted towards changing the spatial condition of the garden.<sup>21</sup> Earth obscuring the garden's pathways and waterworks was removed. Laborers cut high grasses and weeds, planted lawns and removed hedges and trees that blocked views of the tomb from within and outside the complex. The landscape of the garden was once again retouched<sup>22</sup>- new plants were added, while some of the old were removed (Fig.87 and 88). The spokesperson for the Trust, Ratish Nanda, claims that the effort had been on maintaining the historic configuration of the layout through extensive research from previous archaeological data.<sup>23</sup> The trust also claims that through their intervention, for the first time in four centuries, water is flowing through the restored system of hand-chiseled sandstone channels, fountains and pools.<sup>24</sup> (Fig.82,83,84,85 and 86) The ASI also collaborated with the Oberoi Group of Hotels that contributed funds to set up special lighting for the tomb at night.<sup>25</sup>

With the trimmed trees and newly installed lighting system, the tomb has become visible on the city skyline. The changes introduced in the complex are attracting some local and tourist attention. The print media was used extensively to promote the intervention, highlighting the role of the AKTC.<sup>26</sup> With the renewed attention and anticipated increased visitor count, modern service facilities for the tomb have been installed. While the cost of entry to the tomb has remained nominal for the locals, the international tourist is charged much higher in an attempt to generate funds for recovering maintenance costs.<sup>27</sup>

However, the intervention, though essentially at a spatial level, manifests itself at a symbolic level as well. One of the issues is the intention behind the intervention. The appeal for help with the tomb, in terms of financial and technical support, originated at an individual level from some of the city's eminent social people.<sup>28</sup> The AKTC at



Fig.82. Worker replacing paving.



Fig.83. Restoration: Bu Halima's Tomb



Fig.84. Workers replacing paving



Fig.85. (left) Broken paving of pathways before restoration,2002.  
Fig.86. (right) New benches being installed as part of restoration.





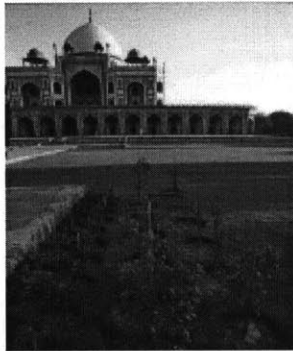


Fig.87. New plants added during the revitalization of the landscape, 2003.

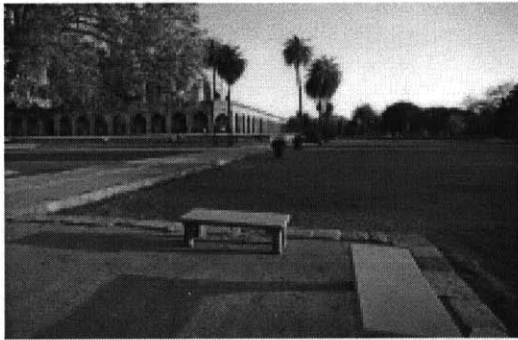


Fig.88. Restored landscape of Humayun's Tomb Complex with new stone benches and retouched lawns.

that time was interested in participating in a project at India that would allow it to test the prospect of collaborating with India's administrative setup in the future with much larger projects, in keeping with its publicized agenda.<sup>29</sup> However, this project offered the AKTC an option of testing waters through a small intervention.

*'...investing in such cultural initiatives represents an opportunity to improve the quality of life for the people who live around these remarkable inheritances...We are keen that our investments create a multiplier effect in the local economy...a significant long-term outcome will be the enhancing of the quality of leisure for residents and visitors alike. A richer educational encounter at a sensitively restored monument...'*<sup>30</sup>

The AKTC's proposed agenda mentioned above is broad, incorporating contextual elements of local economy, education, enhanced experience etc., that could go a long way in influencing popular perception about the tomb and reviving the meanings associated with it. However, besides a restoration of the landscape that has enhanced its physical experience, none of the other intentions have translated into the execution of the project (Fig.87 and 88). It remains a cosmetic intervention at best that did not have any influence on the quality of life of the inhabitants in the surrounding area or the local economy.

Another critical aspect raised by the intervention is the popular perception about the patrimony of the intervening agency itself. The connection of the AKTC to *His Highness The Aga Khan* as the head of an Islamic sect cannot be overlooked.<sup>31</sup> The intervention could be read as an attempt to highlight and claim the Islamic past of the tomb in spite of the concerted attempt to highlight its pluralistic aspects.<sup>32</sup> However, this aspect can only be questioned and not assessed as its actual impact will become apparent only in the long term.



### 5.3 GUIDING THE NARRATIVE OF HERITAGE

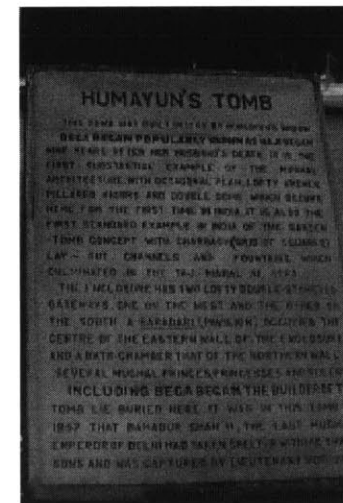
*"...a wonderful early example of Mughal architecture. The elements of its design...were to be refined over the years to the magnificence of the Taj Mahal at Agra. This earlier tomb is of great interest for its relation to the later Taj."*<sup>33</sup>

*"...First great example of a Mughal garden tomb, and inspiration for several later monuments, such as the incomparable Taj Mahal."*<sup>34</sup>

The tourist guides mentioned above and information panels installed by the ASI guide the physical and symbolic experience of Humayun's Tomb as 'heritage' on site. These tourist guides stress its typological designation and relation to the Taj Mahal as its prototype. The connection to Humayun as the commemorated person and Akbar as the patron and source of its spiritual and political significance is lost in the limited description contained in them.

The inscription at the entry delineates a brief history of the tomb (Fig.89). This was a practice that proclaimed historic buildings as part of the open display of 'Indian heritage' organized under the hegemony of the colonial institution of the ASI. The patron of the tomb is designated to be Haji begum. There is a brief description about how the building's architecture assumes importance - with respect to the double dome, the garden setting, etc, all of which 'culminated in the Taj'. It also mentions that Bahadur Shah had taken refuge here and was captured by captain Hudson. It offers almost no information about the person buried here- there are no references to Humayun as the person being commemorated by this magnificent structure. This detaches the opportunity of the tomb to build a narrative of its past in popular perception. To the common visitor, it reduces the tomb to the status of an architectural

Fig.89. Stone panel installed by the ASI on site for historic information about Humayun's Tomb.



prototype. None of the implications of its historic and contextual association to Akbar are apparent. The only highlighted aspect about the tomb happens to be its architectural features, which are appreciable again only due to their status as being part of the sequence of development of the tomb type that culminated with the building of the Taj. Hence the lack of a popular narrative associated with the perception of the tomb through its physical experience is not surprising in the absence of any signifiers of its past.

#### **5.4 CONTEMPORARY vs. COLONIAL SCHOLARSHIP ABOUT THE TOMB**

The visual media (Internet, television etc) is the biggest influence in shaping popular perception about most issues in the twenty first century. But for the perception of historic buildings it is still is the published work. While historic texts about Humayun's Tomb abound, they do not operate in the realm of public perception. Their direct influence is limited to framing academic perceptions, which in turn effects public perception. Hence, this section is concerned with only those textual forms that are most accessible and prevalent in shaping popular perception. This study has identified research books, schoolbooks, newspapers and tourist guides as the written medium most important to constructing the narrative of Humayun's Tomb. Tourist guides and school textbooks stem from the extant academic research. The influence of news articles is sporadic at best, capturing isolated events or parts of the narrative. Hence, the focus of this section is some of the key scholarship about the tomb.

Judging by the recent scholarship about the tomb originating in India, it becomes apparent that the primary resource being used for research are colonial texts.<sup>35</sup> Works like James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (1876), E. B. Havell, *Indian architecture: its psychology, structure and history from the first Mohammedan invasion to the present day* (1927), Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* (1942) and S. A. A.

Naqvi, *Humayun's Tomb and Adjacent Buildings* (1947) were done with the primary intention of generating a system of typological hierarchies that served as a tool to the developing field of archaeology under the British colonial aegis. Most of them suffer from the inadequacies of having been written with these specific intentions only.<sup>36</sup>

An extensive amount of research regarding Humayun's Tomb, both formal and theoretical, has been achieved in the second half of the twentieth century. Referenced on historic Mughal texts, epigraphs and their translations, recent research about the tomb is based on a larger contextual framework that takes into account the socio-political and spiritual themes prevalent at the time it was built. This late twentieth century scholarship ranges from a discussion of the geometry and other formal qualities of the tomb's architecture in Andreas Volwahren, *Living architecture; Islamic Indian* (1970), to the significance of Mughal imperial visits in Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology: Collected Essays* (2001). Glenn D. Lowry, *Humayun's Tomb: Form, Function, and Meaning in Early Mughal Architecture* (1987) deals with the symbolism and meanings associated with the architectural features of the tomb. D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Humayun's Tomb and Garden: Typologies and Visual Order*, is an analysis of the visual order generated by the tomb in its garden setting. The symbolic aspects of the tomb have been analyzed to relate and reinforce theories of Akbar's political policies, in addition to his personal aspirations as a ruler and an individual.

Hence, contemporary scholarship constructs a holistic image of Humayun's Tomb, one that addresses the political and spiritual implications of its past in addition to its architectural achievements. These studies have simultaneously enriched the discourse about the tomb and Indo-Islamic architecture in the initial years of the Mughal era. They have also opened up new avenues of research yet to be explored, within which this research finds its niche. But this easily available body of research has not yet been

fully integrated with the current scholarship in India. A study of why this has happened is beyond the scope of this research. However, its implications for the perception of the tomb are discussed next.

### 5.5 SPATIAL AND SYMBOLIC CONSUMPTION

Framed in the contemporary construct of 'heritage', Humayun's Tomb attempts to trigger public interest at two distinct levels. The first is through its appropriation as a national asset. In this process, it is projected as undeniably Indian, a national icon that exemplifies, through the fusion of Islamic and Hindu architectural elements in it, its pluralistic past. Also operating at the national level is the impact of the interventions by the WHC and the AKTC that attempt to project the building as 'shared heritage' that reinforces the image of a secular India. The second is through its designation as a world heritage monument exemplifying Indo-Islamic architecture as a 'heritage to be valued' and consumed globally.<sup>37</sup>

Through its contemporary designation as a 'national monument' and 'international heritage', the tomb is consumed spatially at many levels. Some of them are 1) people who live off the narrow lanes of Nizamuddin who come to walk, jog and perform yoga exercises in the morning and evening, making it a part of their daily routine like an everyday ritual, 2) foreign and local tourists who visit it as part of short guided tours of Delhi's and India's past, 3) residents of the city traveling in and out of its urban expanse for whom it is a distinct visual landmark.

Through the discussion of the various themes associated with Humayun's Tomb through its history, it has become evident that Akbar's patronage was the source of political and spiritual meanings associated with it. These meanings were central to the overall significance of the tomb at the time it was built. Over time, some of these

meanings have been lost in popular perception and today the tomb has been reduced to a physical presence devoid of a connection to its own past. This has been exacerbated by patronage being attributed to Haji Begum- severing the connection of the tomb to Akbar and negating the meanings associated with his patronage.

Invoking Akbar's patronage also holds the possibility of serving another purpose. Humayun's Tomb is one of the few buildings that represent a past of 'harmonious co-existence' between the country's Hindu and Muslim populations during Akbar's rule. Its representation and consumption as 'shared heritage'<sup>38</sup> is a possible option to trigger a narrative of popular consumption. It can also become an effective political tool appropriated for invoking the image of a pluralistic past in Indian history in an attempt to translate these values into the present. These values are critical to offset some of the current associations operating in popular perception about other Islamic 'heritage' structures.<sup>39</sup>

The symbolism of Humayun's Tomb designated by the heritage industry, represented by the international agencies remain implied - 1) at a national level, it is part of an Indian legacy of Mughal architecture- perpetuating the theme of a shared past that substantiates a pluralistic national identity, 2) for the international audience, it reinstates India's pre-colonial past juxtaposed against the colonial one embodied by the magnificent Capitol complex at Raisina Hills, 3) is a successful architectural and landscape endeavor with far reaching impact on the development of both these, much more than a mere prototype for the Taj. However, these themes have yet to translate into guiding the intervention at the tomb. It is only when these themes register within popular perception that the building would be consumed as heritage.

The direct consequences of the absence of a connection with its past can be seen reflected in the results of the intervention by the ASI and UNESCO. These attempts have been restricted to a restoration of the physical form of Humayun's Tomb. However, it is clear that what the tomb really needs is an intervention that can restore, in part, the meanings ascribed to the tomb at the time it was built. For this, the interventions need to move beyond physical restoration. There is a need to construct a spatial system that integrates the symbolism of the tomb's surroundings, especially the *dargah*, within a setting of public information and interaction. The system must allow for the visitor to understand the tomb's contextual surroundings and its past in addition to engaging with the meanings encoded in its built form that are integral to the tomb being consumed as 'heritage'.

**NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> V. N. Datta, "Panjabi Refugees and Greater Delhi" in Frykenberg (ed.) *Delhi through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 443-50.

<sup>2</sup> Narayani Gupta, "Concern, Indifference, Controversy" in V. Dupont, E. Tarlo, D. Vidal (eds.), *Delhi: Urban Space and Human Destinies* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2000), pp. 161-162.

<sup>3</sup> India's Independence on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 from British colonial rule was followed by its partition into two nation states- India and Pakistan. This brought about the biggest refugee migration of the twentieth century, where millions were displaced from their original homes. A large amount of this population came to Delhi during the partition and the following years. This was further complicated by rural migration into the city that put an added pressure on the city's limited resources as the new capital of Independent India.

<sup>4</sup> N.L. Batra, *Heritage Conservation: Preservation and Restoration of Monuments* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 1996), pp.75-90.

<sup>5</sup> Many smaller and relatively unknown structures like the *Tehsil of Bahadur Shah Zafar* were demolished in the absence of legal injunction of their protected status. See Narayani Gupta, "Concern, Indifference, Controversy" in V. Dupont, E. Tarlo and D. Vidal (eds.), *Delhi: Urban Space and Human Destinies* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2000), pp. 163-64.

<sup>6</sup> In Independent India, the dargah had become an important cultural and religious center of a shared heritage between Hindus and Muslims, an ambassador for India's secular image. The dargah is the site of weekly and yearly Sufi rituals along with other daily activities.

<sup>7</sup> See "The Dargah and settlement of Nizamuddin Auliya" in Chapter 2.

<sup>8</sup> The New Delhi Master Plan marks out these zones and the regulations concerning land use and development for them. Also see Bernard Feilden, *Guidelines to Conservation* (New Delhi: INTACH, 1989) and H. Sarkar, *Museums and Protection of Monuments and Antiquities in India* (Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 1981).

<sup>9</sup> The contribution of the ASI should not be underestimated. It has single-handedly been shouldering the burden of protecting the vast bulk of Indian built heritage. It is only recently that other agencies such as the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), National Research for Conservation of Cultural Property (NRLCCP), Conservation Society of Delhi (CSD) and Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG) have come up. These supplement the ASI's efforts and decrease the pressure on this executing body.

<sup>10</sup> Over time, the tomb became infamous as a site for alleged drug trafficking, smuggling and other socially undesirable activities.

<sup>11</sup> This designation was made by the World Heritage Committee, UNESCO, dedicated to the preservation of historic art and architecture, wildlife and natural landscapes worldwide through fieldwork, advocacy, grant making, education, and training. For details see their website at <<http://whc.unesco.org/nwhc/pages/home/pages/homepage.html>>

<sup>12</sup> For details about the organizational set-up and overall objectives of the agency, see <<http://whc.unesco.org.html>> (5 June, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix (I).

<sup>15</sup> <<http://whc.unesco.org.html>> (5 June, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> The reasons for the inscription of Humayun's Tomb on the WHC listing can be found at <<http://whc.unesco.org/sites/232.htm>> (5 June, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> See "Guiding the Physical Experience of Heritage", Chapter 5.

<sup>18</sup> "His Highness the Aga Khan became Imam of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims on July 11, 1957 at the age of 20, succeeding his grandfather, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan. He is the 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims and a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through his cousin and son-in-law, Ali, the first Imam, and his wife Fatima, the Prophet's daughter". For more information about him, and the international organization he heads, the AKDN, see <<http://www.akdn.org/hh/highness.html>> (7 June, 2003)

<sup>19</sup> For project details see <[http://www.akdn.org/agency/aktc\\_humayun.html](http://www.akdn.org/agency/aktc_humayun.html)> (7 June, 2003) and Appendix (II).

<sup>20</sup> This is a quote from the speech by The Aga Khan at the inauguration ceremony of the restored Humayun's Tomb gardens on 15 April, 2003. For the abstract of his speech, see Appendix (III).

<sup>21</sup> The details about the objectives of the intervention project can be found in Appendix (III).

<sup>22</sup> The last intervention on such a large scale for the restoration of the garden had been in 1916, executed by the ASI under the British colonial aegis. See Chapter 4 for details.

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix (IV).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Swati Mitra (ed.) *Humayun's Tomb & Adjacent Monuments*, World Heritage Series (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2002), pp.

<sup>26</sup> See Appendix (IV).

<sup>27</sup> This is a common practice in most international tourist sites. It is done to offset the high cost of maintaining such sites and tourist facilities for them as part of the Heritage industry.

<sup>28</sup> See Appendix (IV).

<sup>29</sup> Appendix (III).

<sup>30</sup> This is a quote from the speech by The Aga Khan at the inauguration ceremony of the restored Humayun

's Tomb gardens on 15 April, 2003. For the abstract of his speech, see Appendix (III).

<sup>31</sup> The relation of the Aga Khan as a religious leader of an Islamic sect, and as the head of an international organization undertaking projects for historic preservation as well as economic up-gradation has implications for the overall image of the intervention effort. See Samer Akkach, "Expatriating Excellence: The Aga Khan's Search for Muslim Identity", (1997) and <<http://www.akdn.org/hh/highness.html>> (7 June, 2003)

<sup>32</sup> Quote from the speech by The Aga Khan at the inauguration ceremony of the restored Humayun's Tomb gardens on 15 April, 2003. For the abstract of his speech, see Appendix (III).



<sup>33</sup> *Lonely Planet Travel Guide - India* (London: Lonely Planet Publications, 1999), p. 235.

<sup>34</sup> *DK Eyewitness Travel Guides - India* (London: Dorling Kindersley Limited, 2002), p. 83.

<sup>35</sup> This assessment is based on a sample survey undertaken by the Author regarding the work done at a leading academic institution in Delhi, India during June 2002. Results of interviews have also been incorporated as part of the study. Also see "Humayun's Tomb in Colonial Scholarship" in Chapter 4.

<sup>36</sup> The content of this scholarship with respect to the way they project the Humayun's' tomb and the problems lying therein have been discussed in "Humayun's Tomb in Colonial Scholarship" in Chapter 4.

<sup>37</sup> See Appendices IV, V, VI.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted from the speech by The Aga Khan at the inauguration ceremony of the restored Humayun's Tomb gardens on 15 April, 2003. For the abstract of his speech, see Appendix (III).

<sup>39</sup> Sunil Kumar, "Qutub and Modern Memory", *The Present in Delhi's Pasts* (New Delhi: Three Essays Press, 2002), pp. 1-61.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Popular Perception and Missing links in the Narrative**

The perception of Humayun's Tomb as a historic and monumental structure that qualifies it as 'heritage' operates within a setting. The original setting was defined by the overlapping political, spiritual and architectural associations of the tomb. At the time it was built in the sixteenth century, popular perception of the tomb was a function of all three factors. Over time, the political and spiritual association with the tomb's narrative has been lost. Operating primarily on the basis of its architectural associations, the tomb has not been able to incite popular interest as a historic building and as 'heritage'. This section summarizes the trajectory, of each of these associations it was ascribed with at the time it was built, through the history of Humayun's tomb and identifies the problems that have prevented its consumption as heritage.

#### **6.1.1 POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS IN THE NARRATIVE**

The political associations of the tomb were focused around its patron- the Mughal Dynasty in general and specifically around Akbar. The tomb, completed after Akbar's success with establishing a stable empire after the political vicissitudes of Humayun, was the vision of the magnificence of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century. The need to have an architectural presence in the physical absence of the dynasty from Delhi, seat of all previous Islamic empires, to symbolize their might as rulers in India aptly summarizes the dynastic political agenda addressed by the tomb. For Akbar specifically, the tomb was also a manifestation of his imperial vision as a just ruler and personal spiritual aspirations.

These meanings of the tomb activated by their association with the Mughals, gradually eroded away after the construction of Shahjahanabad in Delhi in 1638 by Akbar's grandson, Shahjahan. This event shifted the focus of all political associations to the new Mughal capital, located far from the tomb. With the end of the Mughal rule in 1858, this political connection was severed. The tomb no longer had the patronage

of the dynasty it had been by. Instead, it moved into the patrimony of the ASI for which it did not serve any political function. It held little interest for the British administration, seated in New Delhi as the new capital of Imperial India, that was trying to establish a link with Akbar's more famous architecture. In the absence of a process or agency actively commemorating / invoking its historic associations, the political significance of the tomb became lost in the melee of India's Independence struggle and newly emerging political identities of nationalism. This unchecked condition continued into Independent India as a legacy.

### 6.1.2 ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATIONS IN THE NARRATIVE

At an architectural level, Humayun's Tomb is a continuation of some existing Sultanate and Persian building trends and the inception of some new ones. In the matter of its decoration, use of materials and plan, it forms part of the sequential development of imperial tombs in India. In the matter of its garden layout, it is descended from a Timurid precedent. The only unique feature about it is the combination of the tomb and garden concepts in a visually pleasing manner and their execution at a monumental scale. This set a new typological trend that was followed and developed further by later Mughal buildings. For some time after it was built, it remained the only building of its kind. That changed with the construction of other grand Islamic mausoleums, especially the Taj Mahal. Nonetheless, for scholarship about Islamic architecture and its development in India, it forms a critical example.

However, this aspect is of relevance primarily to the academic world. Typological importance of a historic building is seldom a cause of its appreciation in popular perception, and this is true for this tomb as well. Popular perception is usually centered on visual appeal, scale and popular narratives. Humayun's tomb, while inciting some local and tourist interest, is projected as being short in overall aesthetic appeal. This

stems from its repeated comparison in academic, tourist and popular narratives with its more acclaimed and popular counterpart- the Taj Mahal.

In the matter of meanings encoded within the form (decoration and motifs) of the building, there are some singular implications, highlighted by this study. These meanings were linked to Akbar's political and spiritual manifesto. At the time it was built in the sixteenth century, these meanings were critical as they defined the role of the tomb as the ambassador between the Mughal dynasty as its patron as and the people of the empire as its audience. With Akbar's death, some of the meanings the tomb was charged with lost their relevance while others eroded from the memory associated with the tomb over the next two centuries. However, it was with the dismantling of the Mughal Empire in 1858 that some of these meanings became obsolete – the building could not serve as an ambassador between a nonexistent dynasty and audience. These meanings were specific to their Mughal connection and could not be appropriated to the changing political content. Intervention by the ASI in early twentieth century was directed towards the conservation of the tomb's built form and did not attempt to revive these meanings.

Today, most of the meanings originally associated with Humayun's Tomb have been lost in popular perception. The recent interventions by the UNESCO and AKTC did not address the specific issue of the tombs perception as 'heritage' with respect to meanings encoded within its built form. They too were restricted to the physical appearance of the tomb and its environs.

### **6.1.3 SPIRITUAL ASSOCIATIONS IN THE NARRATIVE**

The spiritual association of the tomb is what gave it most of its popularity at the time it was built. It is also the aspect of the tomb that has almost completely been obliterated.

The spiritual content for the tomb began with the choice of site in the proximity of Nizamuddin Auliya's dargah. The dargah by virtue of the sanctity and barakat ascribed to Nizamuddin Auliya was already a popular pilgrimage center and the center for *sufi* devotees in Delhi since the fourteenth century. With the orchestrated sequence of Mughal imperial visits that included a perambulation of Humayun's Tomb along with the dargah, and the development of the tomb as a dynastic burial ground, the tomb overtook the dargah as the central place of spiritual importance in Delhi.

The importance of the tomb is also borne out by the linguistic and ceremonial treatment meted out to as recorded in the chronicles of that time, court records from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and travelers' accounts. They project Humayun's Tomb in a manner parallel to that of a sufi saint or holy person. In the seventeenth century, Delhi existed on a sort of a necropolis more than a living city and the main site was Humayun's tomb. However, this status lasted only as long as the ritual of imperial visits lasted. The Mughal capital moved into Shahjahanabad in 1638 and the city acquired a new spiritual focus in Jama Masjid.

As a consequence, the tomb lost its imperial patronage and status as a place of spiritual importance. The tomb slipped into decrepitude and neglect for more than a century before the ASI intervened in late nineteenth century. However, all this while, Nizamuddin Auliya's dargah continued to remain popular. The reason was its association with the people through a process of dynamic interaction. The spirituality of the dargah is not simply an intangible aspect to be visually perceived. Juxtaposed against Humayun's Tomb, it continues to be a tangible reality that can still be perceived through the ceremonies, prayers and rituals performed at the *dargah*.

The spirituality of the tomb was constructed around Akbar's political manifesto. The underlying intention was to project him with the divine right to rule. Through ascribing divinity for Humayun (embodied by his tomb and the events of pilgrimage etc that took there), Akbar's intention was to draw from that as his descendant. This significance, though addressed to a public audience, originated and operated from the Mughal realm. With Akbar's Death and the eventual end of the Empire in 1858, this memory was no longer invoked by an agency. Not did it have an audience. In light of the diminishing spirituality and Mughal patronage for the tomb in the absence of imperial visits, the dargah had become the dynastic burial ground for Mughals, a role overtaken from Humayun's Tomb. By late eighteenth century, the dargah had regained its status as the place of prime religious and spiritual importance in Delhi.

Even in the absence of a Mughal patronage, the memory of the spirituality ascribed to the tomb was partly kept alive through the performance of yearly prayers and events held in tandem with the dargah. The acquisition of the tomb complex by the ASI in late nineteenth century for its conservation removed it from the realm of such activities too. This condition has continued into the twentieth century. Nizamuddin Auliya's dargah remains the focus of local and tourist attention in that area. It is almost like a medieval microcosm in urban Delhi – replete with Mughal era traditions, architecture and spirituality. Juxtaposed against this rich mix is the relatively sterile and orchestrated experience of Humayun's Tomb in its recent role of 'international heritage' – its narrative lacking crucial bits of history and meaning.

## **6.2 CLAIMING HERITAGE: IMPERIAL TO INTERNATIONAL PATRIMONY.**

Humayun's Tomb was initially claimed by its patron, Akbar, who appropriated it to suit his specific political agenda. That claim continued through the first century of Mughal rule in India, gradually dying after that. The British, through the agency of the



ASI, established their claims over the monument in the twentieth century, when it had been lying in desolation and decrepitude. In doing so, they removed it from the realm of public access. The academic designation used by the British to format the tomb into its typological classification system further de-contextualized the building. Since being designated an international heritage site, it has symbolically moved away from the exclusive patrimony of the nation represented by the ASI to that of the 'international community' and heritage industry that controls its construction and consumption as 'heritage'. These claims mark the shift in patrimony from internal to external, from defined to nebulous, from Mughal to 'Global' and from imperial to 'popular'. The implications of these transitions have already been highlighted in the thesis as the increasing de-contextualization of the tomb's narrative.

### 6.3 CONSTRUCTING HERITAGE: THE POLITICAL AGENDA

Humayun's Tomb has also served as an instrument of the political context, its narrative being constructed to reactivate a selected past that would best fit the political interests of the 'present'. The chosen past was synchronized with the present to create the narrative of the monument for its popular consumption. The primary function of this act was to legalize the 'present' in context of the revived 'past'. Akbar appropriated a '*Timurid* past' with the 'Mughal present' to establish his political legitimacy as the rightful descendant, and in the process Humayun was elevated to divine status. The British on the other hand, used the figure of Akbar instead of Humayun as the central figure for reactivating the 'Mughal past' of the tomb, integrating it with the 'colonial present' to legitimize their right to rule. In post independence India, the tomb was subsequently designated a national monument, its British designated '*Mohammedan* past' being overshadowed by a constructed 'unified Indo-Islamic past' for the building.

#### 6.4.1 CONSUMING HERITAGE: LACK OF A POPULAR NARRATIVE

Humayun's Tomb was built to commemorate Emperor Humayun's life- as a person, a ruler and a Mughal. This symbolism held significance at the time it was built. But Humayun is not a very famous or glorified figure of 'Indian history' in contemporary popular imagination. He has often been classified as unlucky, hapless, and inept. His political and historical significance, as projected in academic scholarship, is that of an intermediary Mughal between the founder Babur and his successor Akbar. The patronage of the tomb is commonly attributed to Humayun's wife, Haji Begum, who was also not a very significant figure in Indian history. Hence, the tomb's contemporary narrative has lacked a strong central personality around which popular interest can be constructed and consumed.

At the symbolic level, the significance of Humayun's Tomb at the time it was built also stemmed from Akbar's personal political and spiritual manifesto, an association that has been lost in the contemporary narrative of the tomb. The tremendous implications of this patronage for the significance and meaning of the tomb have become obvious through the discussion in this thesis. However, these meanings operate at an academic level and are yet to become ingrained in popular perception. The political and spiritual meanings need to be activated through the physical and visual experience of the tomb as they have the potential to engage popular interest.

Delhi boasts of innumerable historic structures within its vast expanse that date from a variety of empires. While the Qutub Minar is famous as the site of the first Islamic empire and more specifically for the tall minaret, the Red Fort in Shahjahanabad is famous as the last Islamic city before the onset of the British. Its importance on the tourism circuit of the city is also reinforced as the site of the unfurling of the Indian flag on Independence Day each year. The British capitol at Raisina Hills acquires

significance as the seat of power of British India. The nearby *dargah* of Nizamuddin Auliya is popular because of the association to the *sufi* and the rich environment of its settlement that is teeming with the vibrancy of a medieval town.

But Humayun's Tomb lacks any such dominant narrative that could incite popular interest in its symbolism. The significance of Humayun's Tomb in the contemporary narrative is not centered on either Humayun or Akbar's patronage. It is focused on the spatial qualities of the tomb - as a prototype to Taj Mahal. This distances the historic context from the narrative of the tomb, as a commemorative structure, and reduces it to an objectified existence as a prototype of Mughal architecture in India. Even this spatial designation has not served to incite popular interest in the tomb.

#### 6.4.2 CONSUMING HERITAGE: IMPERIAL vs. POPULAR RITUALS

Humayun's Tomb was built to address its patron's specific political and spiritual manifesto. The Mughals appropriated and sustained it as a political tool. But this narrative stemmed from and operated largely within the imperial domain. Though the narrative was addressed to and consumed by a public audience, they didn't participate in its construction. Once the ritual of imperial visits died out, Humayun's Tomb became derelict and abandoned. The nineteenth century preservation by the ASI further removed the tomb from public access. The AKTC and UNESCO interventions have also been unable to instigate the memory of those imperial traditions within the contemporary narrative. The main reason is that their operating policies are tailored for constructing a contemporary tourist experience of the tomb only at the spatial level while the symbolic associations are not engaged within popular perception. On the other hand, Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* was a dynamic place during the sixteenth century, vibrant with rituals and practices. It served to maintain the memory of the departed saint at a symbolic level. At the spatial level, the public could establish

a personal connection with the place through the performance of rituals, prayers etc. It also served a spiritual refuge for those in need. Hence, the *dargah* provided an opportunity for the construction and consumption of a dynamic relation between the spatial and symbolic experience of the place. This generated a narrative that has survived till date, continuing the consumption of the *dargah* as a living heritage of the city. The tomb and *dargah* highlight an interesting contrast in the construction and consumption of heritage - while the *dargah* narrates its past through interactive processes of rituals etc; the tomb narrates its past through an imposed set of external references that are not participatory for the viewer. Humayun's Tomb's sanitized environs are no match for the rich experience afforded by the *dargah*. It lacks the old world charm, its large open expanse and manicured lawns paint a constructed picture that lacks association with its past.

#### 6.5 CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVE AND POPULAR PERCEPTION

It can be concluded that in spite of the concerted attempts by various agencies to revive the past of the tomb as a monument, the building exists in relative anonymity with marginal public interest as compared to other historic sites of similar status. And the main reason for that is that its appreciation at the time it was built stemmed not simply out of its formal qualities of design etc but from their association to a much more complex matrix of political, spiritual and architectural meanings. Public perception thrives on popular narratives. The intervening agencies need to reactivate the tomb's narrative or generate a new one through which the public can experience it not just as architecture or history but also as a metaphor of the two. Until that time the symbolic meanings and values attributed to it are revived, this condition will continue.

The agencies that construct 'heritage' need to gradually carve a special niche for Humayun's Tomb by reconciling various levels of spatial and symbolic consumption

through new rituals, memories and meanings located around it. The possibilities are many- it can serve as a monument, a landmark, a public park, a place for social interaction and a place for academic and historic learning. This can only be done with an understanding about how the tomb is consumed through its association with everyday activities that have become modern day rituals. This expands the concept of the processes of heritage consumption – not necessarily restricting heritage as a legacy rooted in the past to gain legitimacy, but as something that may be re-invented in the present context and gains its legitimacy from the practices and beliefs of the contemporary world. Mere cosmetic intervention into the physical aspects of the tomb has been proved to have not sufficed. There is a need to render the tomb's heritage as a dynamic entity as against the static stature often accorded to it.

The process for doing this is not simply one of physical interventions. The specifics of what can and should be done to revive the past of the tomb are outside the scope of this study. However, this study succeeds in identifying that such a need exists in context of the tomb, and that is critical in itself. Buildings without meanings are like artifacts without substance. To celebrate 'heritage' of historic buildings and monuments in popular imagination, there is a need for the experience of these places to be constructed on the foundation of the knowledge of the meanings associated with their making. Hence, there is a need for a new paradigm for historic conservation that integrates monuments like Humayun's Tomb with their past – their narrative of architectural, political and symbolic meanings. Knowing these meanings would be their true consumption as 'heritage'.



### CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

#### UNESCO, WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Cartagena, Colombia, 6-11 December 1993

(Abstract from the convention report)

Methodological aspects of monitoring of the state of conservation of world heritage cultural properties. The Secretariat emphasized that this document is a progress report reflecting the present state of achievement in a long process of defining the concept of monitoring. In this context, it was noted that three types of monitoring could be distinguished:

**Systematic monitoring:** the continuous process of monitoring the conditions of World Heritage sites with periodic reporting on its state of conservation.

**Administrative monitoring:** follow up actions by the World Heritage Centre to ensure the implementation of recommendations and decisions of the World Heritage Committee at the time of inscription or later.

**Ad hoc monitoring:** the reporting by the Centre, other sectors of UNESCO and the advisory bodies to the Bureau and the Committee on the state of conservation of specific World Heritage sites that are under threat. Ad hoc reports and impact studies are necessary every time work is undertaken which may have an affect on the state of conservation of the sites.

The Secretariat emphasized that in the spirit of the Convention, it is the prime responsibility of the States Parties to put in place on-site monitoring arrangements as an integral component of day-to-day conservation and management. However, it is also considered essential that external and independent professional advisers are involved in a periodic reporting system. This reporting system should not only be addressed to site managers and national authorities, but should also lead to improved World Heritage assistance and decision-making. It was noted that, a monitoring methodology should on the one hand be applicable to all sites and should therefore have scientific rigor, while on the other, it should be sufficiently flexible so as to respond to regional and national characteristics, available technical expertise and their economic and cultural conditions and identities. Explaining the proposed plan, the Secretariat outlined the following priority areas for action:

1. Establishing a reliable data-base with easily retrievable information on the World Heritage sites and the institutional memory of the Convention;
2. Developing a top-quality photo library, in cooperation with the project “Patrimony 2001”, indispensable for good exhibits and for the production of educational and general information material;
3. Using optimally the World Heritage sites for promotional activities, especially in the World Heritage cities where museums and other similar institutions offer an as yet relatively little used potential;
4. Exchange among States Parties of mobile modular photo exhibits;
5. Gradually integrating knowledge on World Heritage into school curricula and extracurricular activities;
6. Production of high-quality information kits for the media in general.



### AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE; Historic Cities Support Program

Humayun's tomb is known as the first example of the monumental scale that would characterize subsequent Mughal imperial architecture. The objective of the project was to revitalize the gardens, pathways, fountains and water channels of the chahar-bagh, or four-part paradise garden surrounding Humayun's tomb in Delhi, according to the original plans of the builders. Site works encompassed a variety of disciplines, including archaeology, conservation science and hydraulic engineering.

The US\$ 650,000 restoration project has featured the removal of 3000 truckloads of earth (12,000 cubic meters), the planting of 12 hectares of lawn, the re-setting and alignment of over 3,000 km of path edging, the preparation by some 60 stonecutters of 2,000 meters of hand-dressed red sandstone slabs (to edge the channels), the creation of 128 ground water recharge pits, the creation of a site exhibition, and the planning and installation of a new water circulation system for the walkway channels. To ensure that water flows naturally through the channels and pools on the 12-hectare (30 acre) site without the aid of hydraulic systems, the water channels had to be re-laid to an exacting grade of one centimeter every 40 meters (1:4000 scale). Over 2500 trees and plants, including mango, lemon, neem, hibiscus and jasmine cuttings, were planted in the gardens. Long-dormant fountains have come to life.

The rehabilitation project undertaken by the AKTC included the following main elements:  
Reinstating the walkways and conserving the edging stones;

Repair, extension and reactivation of the irrigation system;

Establishing water sources for the water channels and irrigation system, including a pump station for a water recycling system;

Conserving, repairing and rebuilding, where necessary, the water channel system;

Re-leveling the planted zones and revitalizing them with species and arrangements that conform to the customs and patterns of Mughal sources; and,

Supporting research that informs the conservation and restoration process, contributes to the development of educational materials for use in schools of architecture, conservation, and heritage management, as well as visitors to the Tomb.

## Appendix 3

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### SPEECH BY HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN

Ceremony to Inaugurate the Restored Humayun's Tomb Gardens

15<sup>th</sup> April, 2003

We are gathered today, near the twilight hour, surrounded by the signs of paradise, at what is clearly a defining moment in world history. The need for better understanding across cultures has never been greater - nor more pressing, the requirement to recognize, value, and protect what is greatest in our common heritage. Breathing new life into the legacy of past civilizations calls for a creativity, imagination, tolerance, understanding, and wisdom well beyond the ordinary. These are some of the qualities that we celebrate in the collaborative outcome represented by the project being inaugurated.

Conceived in 1997 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of India's independence, the restoration of the gardens of Humayun's Tomb was formalized two years later. Implementation began in 2001 and was completed yesterday. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture and the Archaeological Survey of India recognized in this project a symbol of Indian history and of the world's cultural heritage. The role of the National Culture Fund also has to be acknowledged. The task has been a vast one. Water channels were re-laid to such exacting standards that their beds rise only one centimeter every 40 meters. Over 2500 trees and plants were introduced in accordance with our knowledge of the original palette of landscaping. Wells were re-excavated and incorporated into a rainwater harvesting and irrigation system. Sixty stonecutters prepared 2,000 meters of hand-dressed red sandstone slabs.

These restored gardens are the first *chahar-bagh*, or four-part paradise garden to surround a Mughal tomb on the sub-continent. Built nearly a century before the Taj Mahal, the Tomb and its gardens were an expression of the love and respect borne towards the Emperor Humayun by his son, Akbar and widow, Haji Begum. The *chahar-bagh* was more than a pleasure garden. In the discipline and order of its landscaped geometry, its octagonal or rectangular pools, its selection of favorite plants and trees, it was an attempt to create transcendent perfection - a glimpse of paradise on earth. The hues and scents of these gardens, the varied sources of the design elements and of the chosen construction materials, make this monument an important reminder of the power and elegance of diversity, while the sentiments that moved its patrons, united them in a shared virtue.

Revitalization clearly is not just about replacing stones or replanting lawns. It is a process underpinned by careful research, in the present instance, drawing on archives in India as well

as abroad. The project had to draw upon many disciplines - archaeological excavation, conservation science, soil analysis, stone carving, and civil and hydraulic engineering. It also benefited from, and contributed to, the skills of local artisans. Where encroachments had obscured and diminished the grandeur that was once enjoyed by all, we have, together, restored a glory that now becomes ours again.

Endeavors such as this are vital for countries like India, well endowed with historical and cultural treasures, but also burdened by the responsibility of preserving them for future generations. It is my hope that this project will serve as a model for more collaborative ventures between the private and public sector, national and international entities and civil society. Speaking of civil society, central to my broader concern is the fact that investing in such cultural initiatives represents an opportunity to improve the quality of life for the people who live around these remarkable inheritances of past great civilizations.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture insists that each of its conservation and restoration projects should be able to have an important positive impact on that quality of life. We are keen that our investments create a multiplier effect in the local economy. Here, as with the Trust's other urban projects such as in Cairo, Kabul and Zanzibar - a significant long-term outcome will be the enhancing of the quality of leisure for residents and visitors alike. A richer educational encounter at a sensitively restored monument will prompt more tourists to seek out other culturally significant sites in India.

These restored gardens can become the fulcrum and catalyst for socio-economic development as well as an irreplaceable resource for education. I spoke a few minutes ago of this juncture in history, of reviving a legacy and of shared aspirations. Whether through neglect or willful destruction, the disappearance of physical traces of the past deprives us of more than memories. Spaces that embody historic realities remind us of the lessons of the past. They constitute valuable national assets but also represent the patrimony of mankind.

In the troubled times in which we live, it is important to remember, and honor, a vision of a pluralistic society. Tolerance, openness and understanding towards other peoples' cultures, social structures, values and faiths are now essential to the very survival of an interdependent world. Pluralism is no longer simply an asset or a prerequisite for progress and development; it is vital to our existence. Never perhaps more so than at the present time, must we renew with vigor our creative engagement in revitalizing shared heritage through collaborative ventures such as the project we are inaugurating today.

## Appendix 4

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### A MUGHAL SPLENDOUR REGAINED

September 29, 2002

New York Times

By CELIA W. DUGGER

As dusk crept over the Mughal garden that frames Humayun's tomb, the summer air was sodden with heat. In the copious shade of a giant, gnarled ficus tree planted almost a century ago, the temperature hovered around 100 degrees and the occasional breeze could have come from the panting of a dragon. The sounds of India's past and present echoed across the grassy lawns. This was the same bird song that the Mughal rulers themselves must have heard more than 500 years ago. Trees shimmered with the twittering of thousands of tiny starlings. Peacocks strutted the grounds, gracefully undulating plumage in tow. Drifting into the garden from just outside its walls was the clickety-clack of trains running over track laid during the British Raj. From a slightly greater distance came the muffled roar and honk of modern-day New Delhi, the ungainly, sprawling capital of India.

Akbar, Humayun's son and the greatest of India's Mughal emperors, built this grand and austere monument, probably between 1562 and 1571, to honor his father, India's second Mughal ruler, who stumbled to his death down a steep flight of stairs. Scholars believe Akbar chose Humayun's senior wife, Haji Begum, to oversee construction of the enormous sepulcher, crowned with a bulbous dome of white marble. The tomb would later serve as the architectural inspiration for the Taj Mahal, built in Agra some six decades later by Akbar's grandson Shah Jahan. But while the Taj became the world's most celebrated monument to love and a symbol of India itself, forever thronged by tourists and touts, Humayun's tomb sat in lonely splendor. Its charbagh, or four-part garden — the first of the great imperial tomb gardens in India — fell into a sad state of neglect.

O. P. Jain, the president of the Sanskriti Foundation and a leading voice for the preservation of India's ancient heritage, told me that Humayun's tomb is to the Taj what a monastery is to a royal palace, what Sufi poetry is to love poetry, what a monk is to a king. "Humayun's tomb has a certain purity and relationship to God and nature and space, while the Taj has romance and grandeur," said Mr. Jain, who was part of a small group of British and Indian preservationists that approached the Aga Khan Trust for Culture about financing the garden's rebirth. He could also have said the Taj is a building to make you swoon, while Humayun's tomb would cast you into a reverie. And perhaps that's not so surprising given the legends behind the wives who played central roles in the history of these tombs.

Humayun's tomb has a more ambiguous and intriguing story, often unmentioned in guidebooks. Akbar, the son of Humayun's youngest and most favored wife, had a soft spot for his stepmother, Haji Begum, who helped bring him up. Scholars believe that after Humayun's death, Akbar gave his stepmother the riches and responsibility to oversee the construction of his father's tomb. But an account of Humayun's rule, written by his sister, reveals that life with the emperor was far from idyllic. Declaring himself an opium eater, Humayun spent little time with Haji Begum and his other wives, to Haji Begum's sorrow.

In the classic, simple lines and colors of the tomb — composed of earthy red sandstone and pure white marble — there is no suggestion of easy sentiment. It is rather an early statement that Mughal rule was in India to stay. Irfan Habib, a historian and authority on the Mughal era, said Haji Begum's role overseeing the tomb gave her status and prestige. She took up residence in Delhi, despite the fact that her beloved Akbar lived in Agra, the capital of the empire. "Humayun was the only husband she had, and she devoted her life to the construction of the tomb," he said.

In packed, polluted and noisy New Delhi, the tranquil, sweet-scented oasis of Humayun's tomb is still remarkably empty, even desolate at times. "For reasons I don't understand, Humayun's tomb has always been overlooked", said Tom Kessinger, general manager of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, which funded the garden's \$650,000 restoration. "It's the insiders' best-kept secret in historical and architectural terms". That may soon change. The restoration of the garden, itself a monumental task, will be completed by year's end. Summer monsoon rains will drench the spindly, newly planted lemon and mango saplings, the hibiscus and the jasmine cuttings, and make them grow. By December, for the first time in four centuries, water will again flow at a stately pace through a system of hand-chiseled sandstone channels and gurgle from fountains at the center of the garden's square pools. The flowing water seems certain to bring not just life to the garden, but people, too.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture took on the project in 1997, and two years later reached an agreement with the Archaeological Survey of India, public custodian of the tomb and more than 2,000 other historic monuments in India. The restoration of the garden is the first privately funded, collaborative project undertaken by the Archaeological Survey. It will likely be an important model for preserving other wonders of ancient India. The survey has a total annual budget of \$10 million to maintain thousands of national monuments across India.

Ratish Nanda, a 29-year-old conservation architect working for the Aga Khan Trust, has overseen the labor of some 60 stonecutters, who were paid about \$4 a day to hand-chisel more than a mile of edging stones for the garden paths and water channels. Workers carrying baskets on their heads and pedaling bicycle rickshaws removed 3,000 truckloads of

earth that had obscured the gardens' pathways and waterworks. Yet more laborers cut high grasses and weeds, planted the lawns and removed hedges and trees that blocked views of the tomb.

As the men worked, the fine bone structure of the garden re-emerged. "These Mughal gardens are very tight", said Mohammad Shaheer, a professor of landscape architecture who was a consultant on the project. "The geometry is absolutely set". But he also conceded that it has been impossible to recreate the gardens as they were at the time of the Mughals. There are no known drawings or paintings of the tomb until the early 19th century. Instead, he and others involved in the project have relied for guidance on archaeological evidence, as well as mentions in Mughal-era chronicles. They have also preserved elements introduced shortly after the turn of the 20th century during British rule — grassy lawns, sandstone benches and towering palm, cypress and tamarind trees.

In the early mornings, the gardens at Humayun's tomb seemed more like a neighborhood park than a Unesco World Heritage Site. A trickle of people who live off the narrow lanes of Nizamuddin, a village now engulfed by the haphazard sprawl of New Delhi, came to walk, jog and do yoga before the heat descended. Every now and then, a busload of foreign tourists poured out. At night, no one was there but birds and swarms of mosquitoes. The tomb's white marble dome rose theatrically from the darkness, bathed in lights that illuminated it from four sides. Flights of tiny bats swirled around it, fitting witnesses to a Mughal burial ground where both Humayun's favorite wife and the wife who once felt scorned share a final resting place with him.

*Celia W. Dugger, formerly co-chief of the New Delhi bureau of The Times, is the Edward R. Murrow Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.*

### RENOVATED HUMAYUN'S TOMB BECOMES DISABLED-FRIENDLY

**Indo-Asian News Service**

New Delhi, April 15

After a \$650,000 (Rs 31 million) facelift that has added scintillating lights, refreshed fountains and made the tourist site disabled-friendly. The 16th century monument was renovated under a program taken up jointly by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the Aga Khan Foundation for Culture and the Oberoi Group of Hotels. A tourism ministry spokesman said: "A ramp has been built at the entrance of the garden. Bridges have been built across the water channels. This not only adds to the beauty of the monument but also makes it more accessible to people in wheelchairs."

The monument is a major tourist attraction and lies close to the shrines of Sufi saint Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya and mystic poet Amir Khusrau. Tourism ministry officials said about 2,500 trees have been planted in 12 hectares of the lawn ever since the renovation work started two years ago. The fountains have been refilled with water and a rainwater harvesting system has been put in place. There were some wells in the garden that dried up and had fallen to ruin due to years of neglect. All these have been brought to life again, the officials said. About 120 groundwater pits have been recharged and a new water circulation system has been made for the walkway channels.

## Appendix 6

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### FACELIFT FOR ANCIENT DELHI GARDENS

By Jyotsna Singh  
BBC correspondent in Delhi

One of India's most ancient gardens surrounding the 16th century Humayun's tomb in Delhi has been restored to its past glory. Two hundred people worked for three years to revitalize the garden's pathways, fountains and water channels in the heart of the capital. The four-part paradise garden is said to be the first example of an imperial tomb garden in the sub-continent. Humayun's tomb contains more than 100 Mughal graves and is one of the World Heritage sites listed by the United Nation's cultural body-UNESCO.

The gardens were formally unveiled by Islamic spiritual leader the Aga Khan at a special function on Tuesday. Prince Aga Karim Khan, the spiritual leader of Shia Ismaili Muslims, was joined by a galaxy of eminent Indians, including Tourism Minister Jagmohan. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture donated the \$650,000 spent on the project, which was carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). This is the first privately funded project undertaken by the ASI - the agency responsible for maintaining India's more than 3,000 monuments. The agency has been trying to attract more private partners to help meet maintenance costs.

Following the work at Humayun's Tomb, water is now flowing through tanks which have lain dry since the 17th century. "The idea was to restore it to the original shape and vision by using traditional craftsmanship that existed at the time of its creation," project architect Ratish Nanda told journalists. "So instead of cement, fruit pulp and molasses have been used to restore the edges of the tanks."

The massive tomb made of red sandstone and white marble stands on a 120-square-metre (1,290 square-feet) platform, its dome reaching a height of 47 meters (154 feet). Mughal ruler Humayun's son, Akbar, ordered the tomb to be built in 1565 in memory of his father.

Officials say the site attracts nearly 1,000 visitors every day. For the nearly 15 million residents of Delhi, where open space and greenery is fast becoming become a luxury for most, the lush green garden is good news. "It is just overwhelming. I think it will restore some pride in Delhiites," historian Mushirul Hasan was quoted as saying in The Hindu newspaper.



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