



Restored Heritage Structures at Mehrauli Archaeological Park

In the heart of Delhi, where history whispers through ancient stones and nature beckons with its serene beauty, a remarkable transformation took place at Mehrauli Archaeological Park (MAP).

Thomas Metcalf, the Governor's Resident Commissioner in Delhi in 1840's, constructed a weekend retreat complex called Dilkusha (Heart Warming), converting old tombs into English style houses in Quli Khan's Tomb, Boathouse and Guest Houses. He also constructed other ancillary structures such as Circular Dining Room, Security Outposts, Chattris or Follies in the complex. It is written in historical references that this was the summer retreat and he used to rent out this place for honeymooning couples.

Rejuvenation, restoration and rebuilding are tasks that involve hard work, grit and especially imagination and determination - often more than what would have originally gone into creating an asset.

Three historic structures of Thomas Metcalf's "Dilkusha Complex", namely The Metcalf Boat House, The Circular Monument, and The Metcalf Guest House – were crumbling structures, hidden behind overgrown vegetation. However, through untiring efforts, out of box imagination and seamless coordination between the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), which was the main stakeholder, and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Department of Archaeology, GNCTD, Delhi Jal Board and Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), resulted in this transformation within a short span of about 07 months under the guidance of Hon'ble L.G of Delhi who made four visits to the Park.

The rejuvenation of the water body at Quli Khan Tomb adds another layer of achievement to this transformative endeavor.

This refurbished and preserved heritage area in the backyard of the majestic Qutub Minar at the Mehrauli Archaeological Park has now been dedicated to the people of Delhi to carry forward the magical inheritance.

Café Stone: Adaptive Reuse of Circular Monument

The Circular Monument was painstakingly restored to its former glory while preserving its original structure. A beautiful cafeteria now graces its premises, offering visitors a taste of history.

Originally used by Thomas Metcalf as a Dining Hall in 1840's, surrounded by meticulously designed landscaping conducive to heritage setting and Qutub Minar at the backdrop, the Circular Monument has become a place where the past and present coexist harmoniously. Warm and inviting illumination casts a gentle glow and enhances its allure, revealing the

intricate details of the monument even after sunset. The Circular Monument now stands as a picturesque oasis, offering a welcoming space for visitors to savor the park's heritage.



Figure 1: View of Quli Khan Tomb from 'Cafe Stone'



Figure 2: view of Cafe Stone



Figure 3: Chaar baag in front of 'Cafe Stone'

Metcalf's Boat House

One Lodhi period tomb on the eastern side of Quli Khan Tomb which, was converted by Thomas Metcalf into a boathouse at the foot of the double terrace. The boathouse stood beside a small lake partly man made, partly following the natural contours. Once hidden beneath layers of silt and ravaged by time, has been painstakingly restored to its original glory.



Figure 4: View of Metcalfe Boat House along the Rejuvenated Lake

Metcalf Guest House: From Obscurity to Interpretation Center

Adjacent to Quli Khan's tomb, Thomas Metcalfe built a new suite of rooms to accommodate his guests around a second ruinous Mughal structure, adding to this a principal room with a classical fireplace and moulded details at the top of the walls. Behind the building he put a deep recessed plunge bath. A new cookhouse with accommodation for servants on the opposite side of the property was built around a small enclosed court.

The Metcalf Guest House, long concealed under overgrown branches and ravaged by weathering and environmental factors, is now being lovingly restored to its original splendor. DDA's efforts go beyond mere conservation; it is being developed into an interpretation center. This center will serve as a portal to showcase the rich history of the Mehrauli Archaeological Park and its magnificent monuments, bridging the past and the present for generations to come.



Figure 5: view of Metcalfe Guest House with 'Qutub Minar' in the backdrop

Rejuvenation of Water body

Earlier, the water body on the eastern side of Quli Khan Tomb and flanked by the Boathouse was full of silt, debris and was dry. Even though historically this water body was used by Thomas Metcalfe (the Resident Commissioner of Delhi in 1840) as boating and recreation area flanked by a Boathouse, a Horse Carriageway, Circular Dining Room and a Rose Garden; over the years, due to continuous siltation from the catchment areas such as Qutb Minar and adjoining undulating slopes and no proper upkeep had reduced it to a small ditch which remains dry perennially.

Now, the waterbody has been rejuvenated and the surroundings are cleaned up and new plantation have been carried out. Desilting and removal of debris were taken up on priority basis. The arches under the horse Carriageway were restored to original condition as per conservation principles. The historical water culvert under the Horse carriageway has been reopened and restored allowing water from the surrounding catchment areas to flow into the water body, as it functioned before. Random rubble stones as available in site were rammed onto earth at select locations of slopes to prevent soil erosion. No cement or lime concrete has been used in these stone pitching. Soils brought by natural waterflow are allowed to fill the voids and grow grasses and vegetations. Continuous source of water from DJB (Delhi Jal Board) now fills the water body and aerator fountains have been installed for purifying the water – which now converts the dry waterbody to a permanent waterbody, allowing a micro climate to thrive naturally, suitable for local flora and fauna.



Figure 6: Front View of Water-body and lighting



Figure 7: Side View of Water-body and lighting



Figure 8: Water- Body and surroundings



Figure 9: Water- Body and surroundings



Figure 10: View of Quli Khan Tomb from Metcalfe Boat House

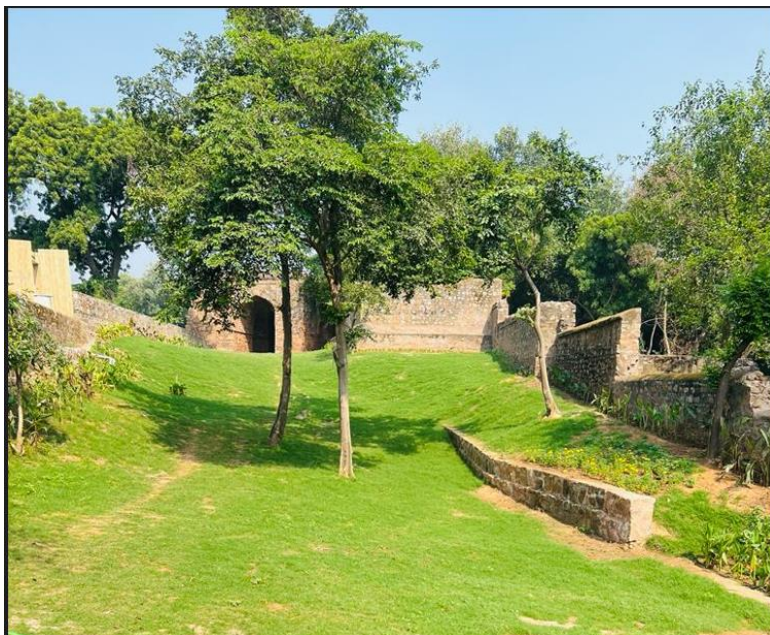


Figure 11: Slopes along Chaumukha Darwaza

Before



After

