



INAUGURATION MARKS COMPLETION OF RESTORATION OF MUGHAL GARDENS OF AGRA, INDIA

Iconic Heritage Sites Again in Bloom after Four Years of Conservation

Agra, India, January 11, 2019 – Significant features of two of India’s most celebrated Mughal gardens— **Mehtab Bagh**, and the Garden of the Tomb of **I’timad-ud-Daulah** at Agra—have been restored following four years of rigorous and complex research and conservation. Today, World Monuments Fund and the Archaeological Survey of India, partners on the restoration, marked the completion during an inauguration ceremony at I’timad-ud-Daulah, alongside project supporters including American Express India.

Only a few of the lush sixteenth and seventeenth-century gardens, built for Agra’s royalty and nobility along the Yamuna riverfront, today remain intact. Others have been significantly altered over time, and those that survive face challenges of urban development, pollution, traffic congestion, and lack of visitor amenities. World Monuments Fund and the Archaeological Survey of India embarked on a project in 2014 to restore the authentic form of two of Agra’s most notable gardens, re-activate their water features, and enhance their visitor experience.

As the project developed it became clear that an innovative approach to water management would be required. Over the centuries, the river that was once fed by the melting snows of the Himalayas became depleted and contaminated. An integrated water management system was designed to address the needs of the project as well as ensure that there would be no discharge or waste. Today, clean water is again flowing in the channels and into the gardens. The transformative restoration seeks to evoke the spirit of a Mughal *Char Bagh* as it relates to fragrance, fruit, shade, and running water.

Students from Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design joined the project by conducting studios in Agra in 2014 and 2015 and engaging in an analysis of the urban fabric that surrounds the gardens to provide holistic solutions for the sites within their urban context.

The four-year project concluded with the construction of a new visitor center at I’timad-ud-Daulah. Raising awareness and visibility of the gardens was an important objective of the conservation, as they are often overshadowed by their more famous neighbor, the Taj Mahal. The enhanced visitor services will now offer local residents and tourists an opportunity to learn more about the history of the magnificent gardens through interactive exhibition kiosks, video, and more.

“The Mughal Gardens represent some of the most important historic features within Agra, India,” said **Lisa Ackerman, Interim Chief Executive Officer, World Monuments Fund**. “We are thrilled to see the successful culmination of four years of work, in partnership with the Archaeological Survey of India, resulting in renewed landscapes that will attract more people to enjoy them and learn about their history. We are especially thankful to The Tiffany & Co. Foundation and American Express India for their generous support to make this work a reality.”

Speaking on the occasion, **Manoj Adlakha, CEO, American Express Banking Corp. India** said, “As one of the leading players in the payments and travel industry, American Express recognises that no industry has a greater stake than ours in preserving the world’s treasured places. We are proud to have partnered with World Monuments Fund to accomplish the restoration journey of the iconic Mughal Gardens in Agra. The restoration of the I’timad-ud-Daulah and its new interpretation center comes on the back of the restoration of Balaji Ghat in Varanasi and highlights our commitment to the cause of heritage conservation. We truly believe that the renewed Mughal Gardens will not only enhance the visitor experience, but will also go a long way in mobilizing the local communities and revitalizing India’s rich cultural heritage.”

“The Tiffany & Co. Foundation seeks to preserve the world’s most treasured landscapes and seascapes, and is honored to have supported World Monuments Fund to revitalize the Mughal Gardens of Agra,” said **Anisa Kamadoli Costa, Chairman and President of The Tiffany & Co. Foundation**. “We are delighted to see the restoration of such important cultural and historic treasures as these two magnificent gardens completed, for the enjoyment of Agra’s community and visitors for years to come.”

The restoration project was generously supported by The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust, The Tiffany & Co. Foundation, Mr. Richard Broyd, American Express India, The Selz Foundation, and Elbrun and Peter Kimmelman. Additional support was provided by Jack Shear/ Ellsworth Kelly Foundation, Tianaderrah Foundation/Nellie and Robert Gipson, and The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation.

To learn more, visit wmf.org.

To download hi-resolution ceremony and site imagery courtesy WMF, [CLICK HERE](#).

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World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world’s treasured places. For more than 50 years, working in over 100 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to the preservation of important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF seeks to inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York City, the organization has offices and affiliates worldwide. Visit wmf.org for more information, or connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India is the premier organization for archaeological research and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation. Maintenance of ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance is the prime concern of the ASI. Besides, it regulates all archaeological activities in the country as per the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958. Headquartered in New Delhi it has 24 circles nationwide. Visit <http://asi.nic.in/> for more information or connect with ASI on [Facebook](#).

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