

A Systematic Approach for the Conservation and Restoration of Historic Monuments in Lahore, Pakistan: Case of Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan



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Abstract: *This paper is an effort to explore the strategies applied for the conservation and restoration of the Historic monuments, focusing on the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan. It includes the identification, documentation, assessment, preparation of a conservation plan and implementation of the conservation plans at site to maintain the identity of the historic buildings. Cultural heritage plays a pivotal role and represents the dignity and elegance of the human activities. The heritage sites are affected by the changing environment and deteriorate due to the natural and man-made agents. The tomb of Ali Mardan Khan was facing multiple challenges, and was continually being damaged for various reasons. The tomb is located in Mughalpura, an area in the neighborhood of old Lahore which was a hub of cultural activities during the Mughal period. The conservation, restoration, and maintenance of historic monuments and heritage sites is always a challenge for the stake holders. There is a shortage of funds, expertise and legislation framework for the preservation of such a large urban area with a number of monuments and it needs a systematic approach for the development of conservation plans with minimum interventions, saving the original urban fabric of the old city of Lahore. The strategy involves tailored conservation objectives, minimum interventions, economical budget and minimum timespan for the completion of the project. The core objective of the research is to investigate the preservation methods, procedures and practices applied for the conservation of Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan, being a valuable heritage.*

Keywords: *Systematic Approach, Conservation & Restoration, Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan, Procedures and Practices*

Introduction

Pakistan is a country that showcases various cultures due to the invasions from the neighbouring Empires, leaving their footprints in the form of significant monuments and heritage sites. The built heritage in this region represents the diverse rituals and norms of the particular area (Ahmad, 2024). In Lahore, there is a variety of historical dynasties, but the most significant are the Mughal, Sikh, and British. Among this rich cultural heritage, the Tomb of Ali Mardan is a magnificent monument that

showcases the dignity of the Mughal Empire and its cultural marks (Fisher, 2016).

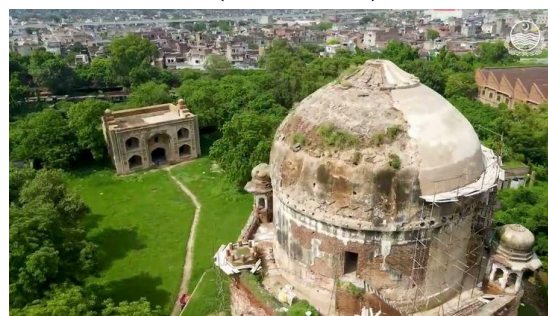


Figure 1: Image showing Dome of the Tomb and its gateway in North (Source: Pinterest)

These heritage sites face numerous challenges, including weather, climate, and human activities. The tomb of Ali Mardan Khan was also facing multiple challenges, which appeared in the form of deterioration and dilapidation of the structure. The worst was done during the colonial period, the closing of original entrance for the public due to the erection railway workshops (Qureshi, 2018). It has been globally accepted that static heritage sites can't survive for a long period of time, but we can achieve our goals through the transformation of these sites into tourist destinations (Liang et al., 2023). It will not only generate financial resources to meet the maintenance cost, but it will also explore the Mughal monument for foreign and local tourists. This paper, particularly, is an effort to explore the systematic approach applied to the conservation and restoration of the tomb. The work is in progress, and we can study the preservation procedure and practice more closely. Therefore, the tomb has been studied as a case study for having an insight into the historical and architectural characteristics of the monument, with its conservation and restoration process.

The tomb of Ali Mardan Khan was constructed during the rule of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in the 1630s. The Mughal Empire, particularly Shah Jahan, is well known for its magnificent monuments and historical buildings. Ali Mardan Khan was a chief courtier during the Shah



Figure 2: Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan
(Source: Google)

Jahan's period and was buried in a garden located in Mughalpura. Later on, his tomb was constructed at the place of his death (Omer, 2018). The tomb was affected by the number of agents due to these environmental and human

activities. It is a remarkable example of intricate architectural details, ornamentation. It was neglected for a long time till it caught the attention of the authorities, and now, its restoration work is in progress since 2022 (PnD, 2022).



Figure 3: Gateway to the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan
(Source: Department of Archaeology)

There is a lack of resources such as funding, expertise, and legal frameworks required for the conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of the heritage sites. Human activities are also a major source of deterioration and damage as the common man doesn't know how to behave with these heritage sites. Rapid urbanization and industrialization laid the foundation for the dilapidated condition of the heritage sites. Inappropriate restoration policies and unavailability of the heritage professionals, skilled craftsmen collaborated to worsen the conditions. The conservation works can be enhanced with appropriate strategies, policies, and regulations for the sustainable preservation.

1.1. Objectives

This study focuses on the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan to develop a conservation and restoration model for Pakistan's historic monuments. It seeks to address the challenges faced in this endeavour and propose viable solutions to safeguard these invaluable heritage sites for posterity.

The main objectives of this study are:

1. Documentation of the monument to record the architectural, historical and social value of the monument
2. Identification of key factors

contributing to the deterioration of the monument.

3. Proposing a holistic approach for its conservation and restoration.
4. Emphasising the importance of sustainable practices in heritage preservation.

2. Literature Review

Pakistan's built heritage is composed of diverse cultural heritage. The conservation and restoration of these monuments are facing multifaceted challenges. It requires a systematic and interdisciplinary approach for the sustainable developments in the historic cities.

2.1. Cultural Significance and Heritage Management:

The conservation community first used the concept of 'Cultural Significance' when values were ascribed to cultural heritage. The term was further defined by its association, meaning and record related to it. It includes both the building itself, its fabric, and its whole setting within a place (Liang et al., 2023). UNESCO has recognized the four cultural values associated with heritage: historical, artistic/aesthetic, scientific, and social. Cultural heritage is a legacy for any society with physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society. They are inherited from past generations and maintained by the present generation. Hence, needs to be preserved for the bestowed of future generations (Ahmad, 2024).

Understanding the inherent cultural elements' value and managing the protection and enhancing the value is necessary. There is an essential need to comprehend the historical management. Conservation and restoration are important for sustaining the value and significance of historic sites (Lopez, 2024).

2.2. ALI MARDAN KHAN

The tomb is surrounded by railway property and located on Mughalpura Road (earlier known as Vetman Road or Wheatman Road), right from the Grand Trunk Road. Near the railway track on the road is a signboard where "MET-1" is written; beyond lies the gate through which

people can access the tomb through a passageway (Omer, 2018).

Ali Mardan was an important official in the Mughal Empire under Emperor Shah Jahan. Ali Mardan was born in a Kurdish family and served as governor of Kandahar under Persia's Safavid dynasty. After Shah's death in 1629, he became fearful for his life because the successor Shah Safi was sacking the courtiers who were loyal to the earlier king. It is said that somewhere in 1637, Ali Mardan offered to surrender Kandahar to the Mughal Empire in exchange for his safety and Shah Jahan agreed to the offer. That was the time when Ali Mardan entered the Mughal dynasty. Soon he became a dominant member of the Mughal nobility and was appointed Governor of Kashmir, Lahore and Kabul. Later in 1639, Ali Mardan Khan was given the title of Amir al-Umara (Lord of Lords), made a Haft Hazari (commander of 7,000 troops) and appointed viceroy of the Punjab which then stretched from Kabul to Delhi (Abbas, 2012).

Ali Mardan Khan is also an eminent engineer. He is the one who supervised the construction of several royal buildings in Kashmir and the digging of the Delhi canal, which runs between the Red Fort and the old city. The water supply system of Shalimar Gardens in Kashmir (Gulmarg) was also planned by him, and his lasting contribution to actualize Shah Jahan's beautiful and paradise-like vision for Lahore was the construction of a canal from the river Ravi for the supply of water to the Shalimar Gardens, as well as for the irrigation and cultivation of surrounding areas. He is known to have built many edifices and gardens in Nimla, Kabul, Peshawar, and Lahore (Khan, 2014).

It was one of the sad moments for the Emperor when his favorite Ali Mardan died in 1657 while on his way to Kashmir. Ali Mardan Khan's body was carried back to be buried in the magnificent tomb that he had built for his mother in Lahore, where he was buried along with his mother and her maidservant (Shahid, 2015).

He has come to be locally regarded as a notable spiritual figure, and locals call the tomb Mardan Khan's durbar (shrine). The grave is in a chamber below ground level, accessed by stairs,

and has been decorated by visitors as though it were a saint's shrine (Congress & Congress, 1983).

2.3. Documentation and Assessment

The conservation and restoration of built heritage depends on precise and accurate documentation and systematic approach towards careful identification of issues responsible for deterioration and conservation practices to protect the monuments for the future generations. The community also plays a key role to safeguard the built heritage as a symbol of national identity. Through strategic approaches, built heritage of Lahore can be protected and conserved dynamically. After completing the documentation and surveys, the structural assessment is also a crucial step to determine the physical stability of the tomb. Signs of deterioration and damages were recorded with the identification of root causes. The context of the monument is playing a limited role as general public can't directly access the monument due to the restrictions by the railway authorities. Environment is another root cause to damage the monument through temperature variations and urban pollutions.

2.4. Challenges and Opportunities

The monument have to face multiple challenges for survival in terms of environmental issues and human activities. The renovations done in the previous times should also be documented to develop the record of changes done at site. Conservation techniques play a significant role and they must be non-invasive. The conservation and restoration should be done through historically precise replacements. Precise efforts can be helpful to mitigate the effects of humidity and temperature. Appropriate landscaping of the context area can be helpful to control water flow and can reduce surface erosion due to the seepage.

Preventive measures such as regular maintenance by the trained staff and community participation through organized workshops and seminars to generate awareness can be an opportunity to protect the heritage site by the visitors. Funding opportunities from government and non-government institutes.

3. Methodology

The core objective of the research is to examine the conservation works at site, scheduled by the Department of Archaeology, Punjab approved in 2022. The work is in progress and will be completed in 2025. The research has been conducted by the mixed method. The site, tomb of Ali Mardan Khan was selected due to the historical and environmental significance. Ali Mardan Khan completed various projects of high architectural value. The research started with the selection of the historic monument of high architectural value.

- Archival data has been collected from the primary and secondary resources. Internet surfing, literature review through records of Department of Archaeology, books, magazines, newspaper articles, webpages regarding the historical significance, causes of deterioration, previous work done for the protection of the heritage site.
- On the basis of collected data, review of literature has been done to schedule visual and pictorial surveys of the site.
- The site has been surveyed to examine the conservation works, being done at site.
- The conservation works has been assessed in terms of environmental and social sustainability of the area.
- The conservation procedure and practice has been investigated to enhance the tourist value of the site, focusing the economical upgrading of the neighbourhood communities.
- On the basis of all the results and discussions, recommendations has been proposed for the sustainable development of the community, in which the monument is located.

4. Case Study – Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan

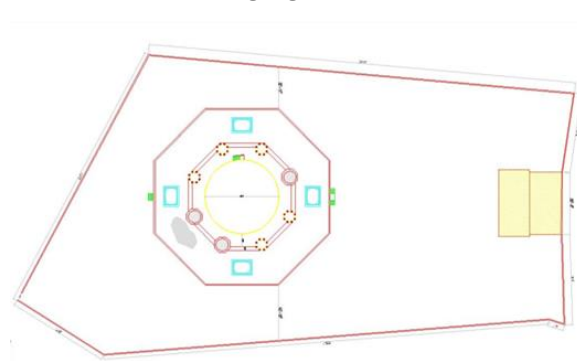
Ali Mardan was a civil engineer, an architect, a commander of Shah Jahan's forces and an able administrator as well. As a Safavid engineer and architect, he built the cistern in the Ganj Ali Khan Complex at Kirman, restored the old Fort at Qandahar, and constructed Qandahar's Bagh-

i-Nazar and its new Fort at Mount Laka. He also constructed a new market in Kabul and built bridges there (Abbas, 2012)

4.1. Location & Context

Mughalpura is a town, located in the neighbourhood of the old city of Lahore. Mughalpura gets its name from the Great Mughal Empires of United India and most of the local roads are named after Mughal Emperors. Mughalpura is in the eastern part of Lahore neighbouring Lahore Cantonment in the South. Mughalpura is located near the Lahore Railway properties with rich urban content and historic background. The place where the tomb is located touches the following significant sites of Lahore.

- Ultimate Martial Arts Centre
- MET 1
- MET 2
- Locomotive Works-Pakistan Railways
- Jamia Anwar-e-Madina
- Govt. Technical Training Institute
- Jamia Masjid Ghousia
- Mughal Eye Hospital P
- Pakistan Railways Hospital
- Workshop of Railways
- Tomb of Nusrat Khan



Mughalpura road which was earlier known as Vetman Road or Wheatman Road, can be accessed, right of the Grand Trunk Road. Near the railway track on the road is a sign board where "MET-1" is written, beyond which lies the gate through which people can access the tomb, through a passageway.

Map 1: Map of the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan with its context.



Map 2: Image of Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan with its context showing Tomb, gateway and passageway from Wheatman Road, Lahore

4.2. Historical Importance

Few people, even residents of Lahore, are aware that a mid-seventeenth century Mughal Tomb

exists at Mughalpura, Lahore. Unfortunately, this structure, the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan (built in 1656-1657) received slight attention in terms of its preservation and was bereft of

almost all its exterior and interior ornamentation. This building reflects, the Iranian Kashi technique, a special flavour of Qandahar and the features of the traditional architecture of Hindustan. His mother's mausoleum, which later became his place of burial, was the tallest mausoleum in India at the time. It was very spacious. It had many corridors, ponds, baradaris and other buildings. On all of these, decorative Kashi and Pichi work had been done. The only comparable work in Lahore was in the Wazir Khan Mosque. The tomb was also renowned in the whole of Sub-continent, because of its height and style by dome. Shalamar Garden, Badshahi Mosque and Taj Mahal are some examples of 16th century Mughal architecture with double dome.

Originally decorated some traces remain on the tomb. Several anthropogenic factors exacerbated the normal conditions of exposure. The stone was damaged during the war, Sikh and later British interventions, neglect and deferred maintenance, and an ever-increasingly polluted atmosphere of urban Lahore. Previous efforts at stabilizing the monument by disassembly, ferrous pinning, and reassembly have added to the long-term displacement and material loss. Considering this, future conservation efforts must proceed with extreme caution. All the lime concrete flooring was destroyed. Plaster on ground floor walls up to dado level was mostly missing. Kankar lime plaster on interior walls glazed plaster was missing in most of the places. Due to the seepage of rainwater from the roofs, the plaster on the soffit of slab and dome was also damaged. The original wooden gate is missing. The entire structure needed cleaning and removal of dirt and dust.

4.3. Adaptive reuse during Sikh Period

During the fall of Mughal Empire, the destruction of Lahore was on a rise. In the times of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, this splendid tomb was used as a magazine which was under the charge of Gulab Singh Bhindoya. Along with the city, this mausoleum was plundered so brutally that the pages of history are still wet with tears shed for this once glorious creation. The brick sellers ripped the bricks from the boundary wall. Rest was taken care of during the Sikh rule by

Sardar Gulab Singh Bhindoya. He pulled down a number of unique buildings within the boundary wall and used the material thus obtained to construct buildings of the garrison. Time is unforgiving and one can't even find remnants of this garrison

4.4. Adaptive Reuse during British Period

The British have also played their part in vandalizing the beautiful face of the cultural heritage and destroying the historical buildings of Lahore. Two major injustices were done. First the demolition of Mohallah Dara Shikoh and second the destruction of the great and antique historical buildings for the construction of Lahore Railway Station and expansion of the Railway System. A railway track was laid in the middle of the compound of the of Noor Jahan's tomb. Naulakha garden was decimated as it was surrounded by the Railway station. Platform no.1 and a workshop ate up mosques of the Shah Jahan Era and for Railway store the tomb of Ali Mardan Khan was sacrificed. With the passage of time, we are now at a point where the majority of the citizens of Lahore aren't even aware of the tomb of Ali Mardan Khan behind the high walls of the Railway store. Aside from the main gateway and the domed building of the actual tomb, the once glorious porches and other unique buildings had lost even their remnants.



Figure 4: Alternate Passageway to the Tomb, constructed during colonial period

5. Identification of key factors contributing to the deterioration of the monument

Due to the significant impact of extrinsic factors that include, but are not limited to temperature, solar radiation, moisture, wind, human activity, and airborne pollution, the study of Lahore's

environmental conditions specific to the tomb were key in conducting a more conclusive conditions assessment and diagnostics for the monument. The city of Lahore lies 712 feet above sea level and falls under a semi- arid climate zone with low humidity. During the year, there is little rainfall, the average annual rainfall is 607 mm.

The temperature during the long, hot and dry summer periods remains high throughout the day, ranging closely between 80-130°F with an average high of 95°F. The winds are hot and full of dust during the day while nights are slightly cooler. On the other hand, the day temperature for the short, rainy winter periods can get as high as 90°F but drop as low as 41°F at night. The highest diurnal temperature variation in the city is experienced between March to May with temperature difference as extreme as 59°F. Additionally, in summer the sun travels through east, crossing the meridian due south at noon, ultimately exposing western facing structures to high intensity solar radiation until it sets in the west.

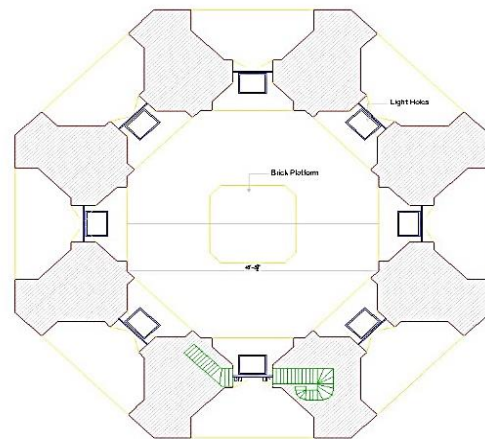
Therefore, the western face of the tomb a more extreme and longer exposure to direct solar radiation through most of the day.

6. Architectural Characteristics

The tomb is now in a semi-ruined state, lacking its decorations, though the main structure is intact. This is in brick with a dome of 42 feet (13 m) in diameter above an octagonal drum with iwans on each side. There are kiosks around the top of the drum. The tomb stands on an octagonal podium, with each side 58 feet (18 m) at the edge. It would have been originally decorated with stone facings and inlays (kashi kari), and fresco paintings, some traces of which remain on the tomb. The two story gatehouse has retained much more of its decoration; originally there were perhaps four gateways. The tomb would have stood in the Centre of a paradise garden as other Mughal tombs do.

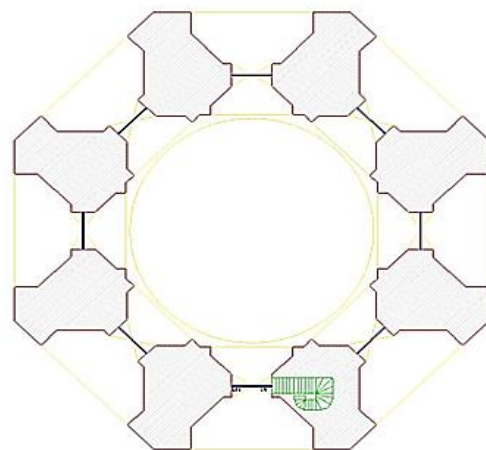
The tomb is surrounded by Pakistan Railways property and can only be accessed through a walled passageway. Main entrance of tomb has been closed by railways authorities. According to evidences, the tomb would have stood in the

centre of a paradise garden as other Mughal



tombs do. But now it has irregular boundary which does not reflect the concept of paradise gardens. Due to the lack of maintenance, grass overgrown and insects started being born and caused. When you can access through a walled walkway to tomb, you can see old capitals of column gateway.

Map 2: Ground Floor Plan (Source: Department of Archaeology Punjab)

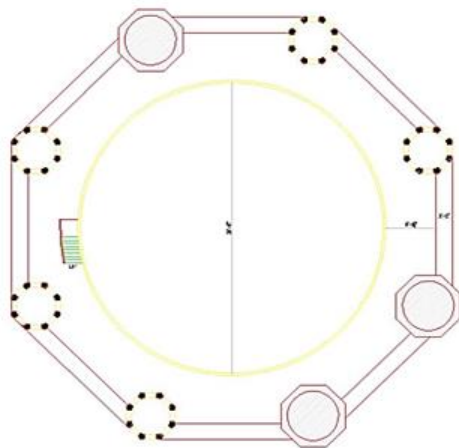


Map 3: Mezzanine Floor Plan

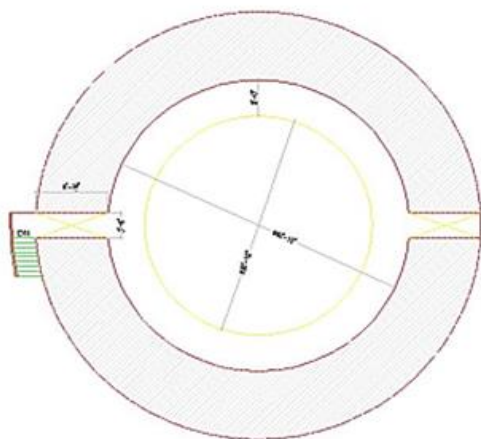
(Source: Department of Archaeology Punjab)

The main gate of the double story structure is in the centre of the western wall and it is comprised of peshtaq (arched entrance), showing the muqarness. The monument has been constructed in brick using lime mortar. The internal walls are plastered and external sides was decorated with kashikari. The double story structure is of octagonal in plan and all the four sides show

balance and symmetry. There is a staircase on the east side leading to first floor and basement.



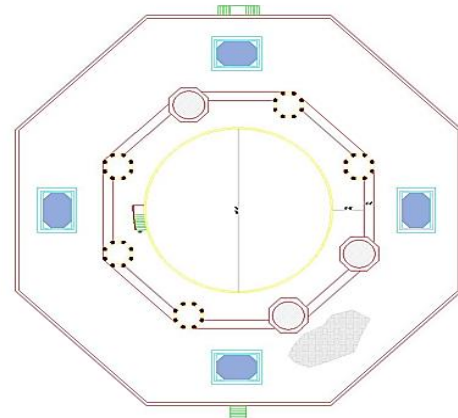
Map 4: Top View of the Tomb (Source: Department of Archaeology Punjab)



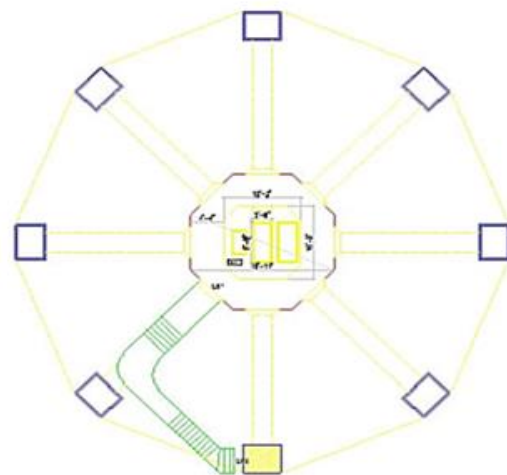
Map 5: Plan of Double Dome of the Tomb (Source: Department of Archaeology Punjab)

The building is located on the three feet high octagonal platform. There are pavements around the octagonal platform. There is a hauz (tank) of eight feet in length, five feet in width and four feet in depth on each cardinal direction. The raised platform helped to protect the structure from dampness. But due to the neglect, these tanks were caught fungus. The rest of the area has brick on edge flooring with geometrical patterns. Ground has been covered with white colour due to salt crystallization. The interior of the hemispherical dome is decorated with qalib kari and it is one of the double dome structures.

The interior of the structure has affected by the stucco plaster under the dome. The dome is supported by four feet thick cylinder, having two openings on north and south sides. The drainage of the rain water is through the panels, located in the inner sides of the walls.



Map 6: Roof Plan of the Tomb (Source: Department of Archaeology Punjab)



Map 7: Plan of the Basement of the Tomb (Source: Department of Archaeology Punjab)

There is a basement which can be accessed through a staircase in the eastern side and there is a corridor around the central chamber with a flat roof. There are seven openings for the natural light. The graves are located on the raised platforms with moulded ceiling. Historical evidences proves that it was originally a unique structure with double dome. There were eight kiosks at each corner of the octagon. Out of eight, only three were surviving but badly

damaged.

7. Conservation Strategies and Practices at Site by Department of Archaeology

As per records of the Department of Archaeology, after a long time of neglect, the conservation of Tomb has been started in 2022 and the work is in progress at site. The monument has been constructed in a large garden, developed by himself as he was served as an architect during the reign of Emperor Shah Jahan and he completed various significant projects such as Shah Canal and Shalimar Garden, Lahore. This large garden, constructed by Ali Mardan Khan by the order of Shah Jahan was converted in the burial place of his mother and her maid. A magnificent structure with double dome was constructed by Ali Mardan Khan on the graves of his mother and her maid. It was a tallest structure in the Tombs of Lahore. The garden also has a remarkable entrance gateway to access the tomb. The tomb and its gateway both have been ranked in high architectural value, near to the standards of Mosque Wazir Khan (Chishti, 2006).

Ali Mardan Khan was also buried in the tomb where his mother was buried and a third grave was constructed for him in the basement of the Tomb (Mumtaz, 1985). The tomb was neglected as its access has been changed by the British. Ranjit Singh stolen all the precious stones of the tomb and left it on the mercy of time (Koch, 2008). Both Sikh and British were merciless to the Muslim monuments. Resultantly, the tomb

was standing in a deteriorated form. But on the other hand, the tomb was also safe from the human vandalism, however, it couldn't be saved from the climatic and environmental impacts. The seepage through the landscape around the monument damaged the structure. The tomb was in dilapidated form, when Department of Archaeology decided to protect it in 2021 and a fund of Rs. 49.993 million was allocated for its protection (PnD, 2022). The conservation work at site has been started in 2022 and will be completed in 2025. After the conservation works, the monument will be opened for the general public. The conservation policies and practices focused the historical practices. The original structure is being tried to be saved.

7.1 Conservation of Exterior Facades

The tomb of Ali Mardan was finished with white marble and inlay was done in black marble. These stones were taken away by Ranjit Singh. Traces can be seen in few places on the facades of the monument (Hindi, 1882). The tomb of Ali Mardan Khan's conservation work was started from the top to bottom in the exterior side. The cracks were repaired by using the material, used at the time of construction. The kiosks were eight in number but five of them were vanished during the period of deterioration. The five missing kiosks were conserved present in the current state. The roof of the tomb and its drum which were in dilapidated condition, but structurally, they are safe. The dome and its cylinder has been finished with white marble.



Figure 5: Image showing the conservation works of Dome and its cylinder.

The rest of the facades was also in dilapidated condition due to the vegetation growth on the parapet walls, peshtaq and facades. There are cracks due to the seepage of moisture through

the unwanted plantation. However, the raised platform saved the structure from collapse. The structure has been conserved with marble finish.



Figure 6: Images showing the repair work of the facades and peshtaq with arched openings.

7.2. Conservation of Interior Chamber

The interior fresco work has also been redone on the old patterns. The work is done by the Artist named Muhammad Mustafa, serving in Department of Archaeology, Punjab. The fresco work has been saved, utilizing modern techniques.



Figure 7: Images showing conservation of Fresco Work on the interior surfaces
(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6QPhS1h-Zk>)

7.3. Conservation of Space around the tomb

The space around the monument and in between tomb and gateway has been renovated with cutting edge bricks, developing the geometric patterns as shown in the following images. There are octagons and filled with bricks. The bricks are of Mughal style small bricks.



Figure 8: Figure showing the flooring of the space around the Monument.

7.4. Conservation of Gateway

The original gateway which has been abandoned due to the adjacent railway properties has been conserved with its fresco works. The gateway has been permanently closed on the construction of the railway workshops. Alternative passage has been provided through wheatman road. This passage also opens to the tomb of Hazrat Seharwardi.



Figure 9: Original gateway to the Tomb

8. Results & Discussions

The Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan is being conserved by the department of Archaeology, Punjab, maintaining its authenticity and accuracy. The monument is one of the rare examples of double dome and it is one of the tallest structures in the historic core of Lahore. The work has been started in 2022 with funding of 50 million rupees by the Department of Archaeology, Punjab. The work will be completed in 2025. After the completion, the tomb will be open for the public. The original gateway couldn't be opened due to the railway properties which are adjacent with the boundary wall of the gateway. The tomb has been conserved with minimum interventions, saving whatever is remaining. The long passage can't enhance tourist value of the neighbourhood as passage is too narrow to pass four wheel vehicles. One of the access has to be developed, either opening the original gateway or increasing the width of the passage, so as to facilitate the visitors. The passage is too long to walk and accessibility is one of the main element to develop urban fabric on the historic timelines.

9. Conclusion & Future Recommendations

Considering the whole process of conservation which involves identification, pictorial and visual surveys, documentation, assessment, preparation of conservation plans and implementation of these plans at site. Mughals constructed dominant entrances, usually at the raised platforms (Koch, 2008). In this case, first the tomb lost its beauty due to the vandalism of Ranjit Singh who taken away all the stones and British damaged it by closing its original entrance. The tomb should be accessible to the visitors. This long and narrow passage cannot facilitate the visitors. It is recommended to provide easy access. The enhanced tourist value can also upgrade the urban fabric and socio-economic status of the neighbourhood. It will serve to future generations as a symbol of dignity of the past.

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