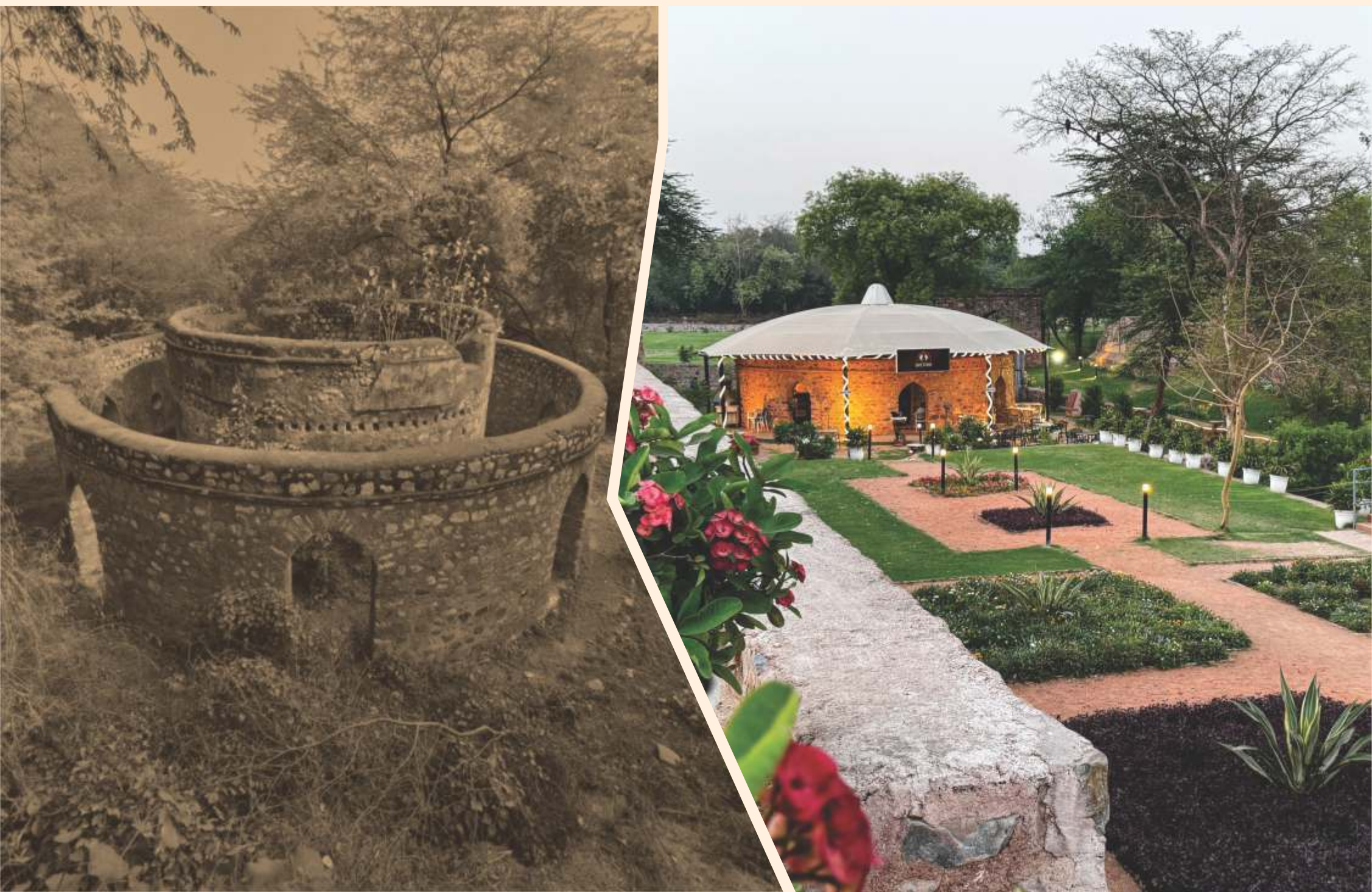


MEHRAULI Archaeological Park

FROM DILAPIDATION TO RESTORATION





Contents

Mehrauli Archaeological Park	2
The Tale of Apathy and Neglect	4
Restoration and Rejuvenation Efforts	24
Chaumukha Darwaza	32
Tomb of Ghiyas-ud-din Balban	34
Rajon ki Baoli	36
Jamali Kamali Mosque and Tomb	38
Quli Khan's Tomb	40
The Unknown Circular Monument	42
Metcalf's Guest House	46
Metcalf's Boat House	48
The Transformation	52

Mehrauli Archaeological Park



Delhi, a city pulsating with life, is a tapestry woven from threads of history. Its monuments, parks, and buildings stand as testaments to the rich cultural and architectural legacy. However, the relentless march of time, coupled with the pressures of urbanization, threatened to dim the lustre of these treasures, which needed attention.

It was with a deep sense of responsibility that Hon'ble Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, embarked on a mission to safeguard and restore this invaluable heritage. Soon after taking over as the LG of Delhi, Shri Saxena, along with a dedicated team of DDA officials, undertook a host of initiatives to rejuvenate iconic landmarks, revitalize sprawling parks, and breathed a new life into the historical structures.

THE TALE OF APATHY AND NEGLECT

The Mehrauli Archaeological Park also unveils Delhi's pre Islamic past. It houses the imposing Chaumukha Darwaza, and the ruins of Lal Kot, which is the oldest surviving Fort in Delhi built by the then Hindu rulers, the Tomar Rajputs, in 1060 AD. It further showcases architectural gems from subsequent eras, including the Delhi Sultanate-Khalji, Tughlaq, Lodhi dynasties, the Mughal Empire, and even the British Raj.

Epitomizing this rich past are captivating sites like the Tomb of Balban (1287 AD), the Jamali Kamali Mosque and Tomb (1526-1535 AD), Quli Khan's Tomb, the fascinating stepwells of Gandhak ki Baoli on the park's edge, Rajon Ki Baoli and the Madhi Masjid.

Till February 2023, when Shri Saxena first visited these sites and took up the rejuvenation works, these historical monuments were lying in a complete dilapidated state with overgrown vegetation and crumbling structures due to decades of apathy. Significantly, the Mehrauli Archaeological Park has undergone a massive restoration and overhaul in the last two years (2023-2025). The collaborative efforts between the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have infused a new life into the Park.



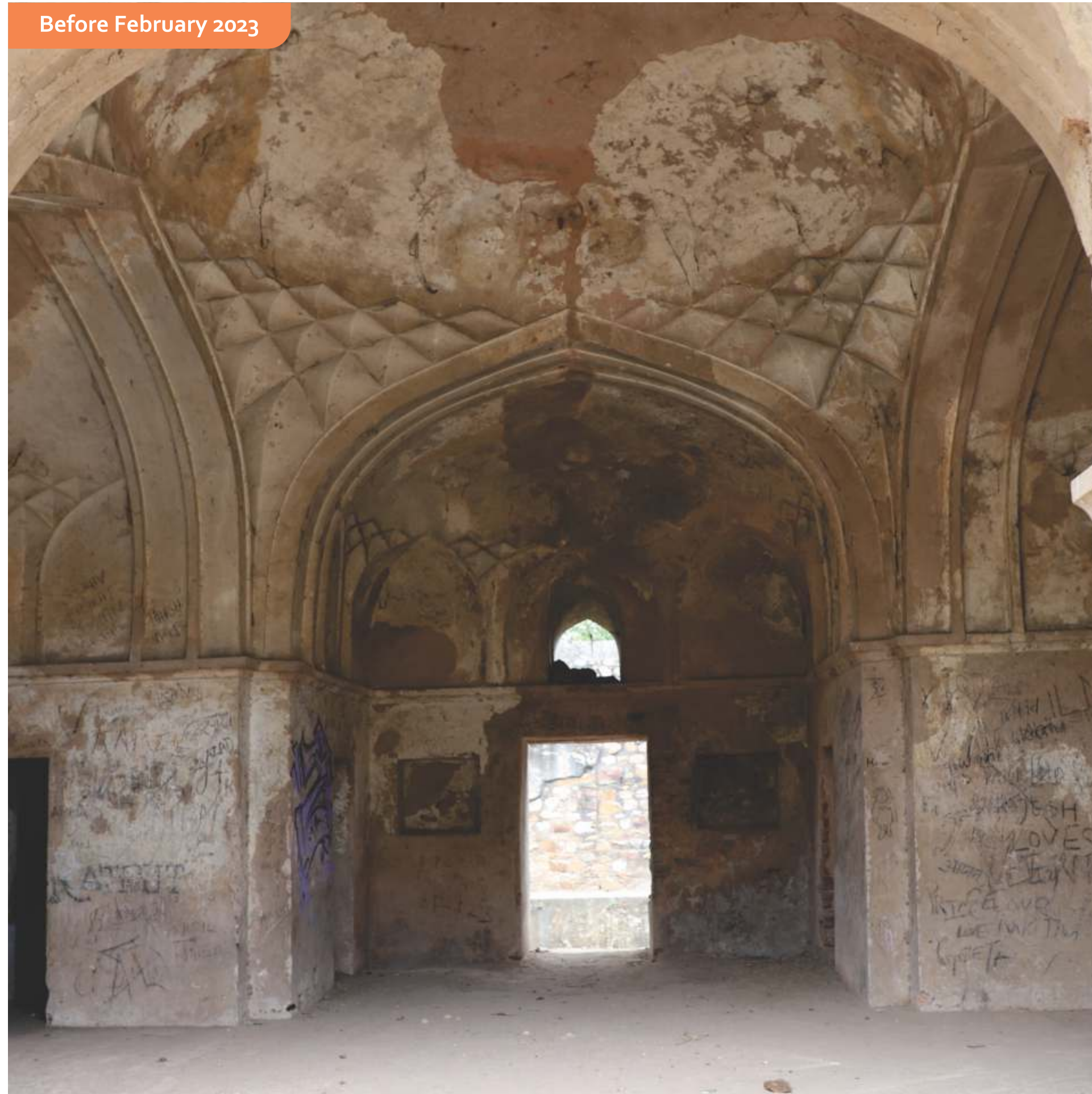
Before February 2023



Before February 2023



Before February 2023



Before February 2023







LG's Intervention

Hon'ble LG first visited these sites on February 4, 2023, and actively monitored the restoration work with numerous meetings and dozens of visits thereafter. He also got these monuments and sites handed over to the DDA from ASI, thus ensuring their continued protection and restoration. This collaborative effort has led to a brighter future for the Mehrauli Archaeological Park.







Restoration and Rejuvenation



Mehrauli Archaeological Park houses over 60 historical monuments. Several monuments within the Park have already been fully restored and reopened to the public. The historic waterbody near Metcalfe Boat House, has been de-silted and transformed back into a functional water body, setting a pioneering example for future restorations. Metcalfe's Lodge (Dil Khusha) has also been restored, and the visitors are now enjoying an eco-friendly bustling restaurant nearby, created in the 'Unknown Circular Monument' (Gazebo). Similarly, Quli Khan's Tomb has also been restored and reopened to the visitors. Restoration work continues at significant historical sites including Balban's Tomb Complex, Rajon ki Baoli and other structures within the Park. These initiatives aim to not only revive the Park's historical significance but also to elevate its appeal as a must-visit destination for tourists.







Chaumukha Darwaza

Within the Mehrauli Archaeological Park lies the imposing Chaumukha Darwaza, a monumental gateway whispering tales of a bygone era. This significant structure, recently restored stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of the Delhi Sultanate and the on-going efforts to bring back its grandeur.

Constructed during the Sultanate period (12th-16th centuries AD), the Chaumukha Darwaza, meaning “four-faced gate,” served as a grand entrance to a larger complex, possibly a palace or a religious site. The exact purpose of the complex and the specific sultan who commissioned the gateway remain undetermined. However, its architectural style, featuring red sandstone and intricate carvings, suggests a Tughlaq or Sayyid dynasty origin.

Decades of neglect and lack of upkeep had taken a toll on the imposing structure. The intricate details of its facade had become faded, and its structural integrity required immediate attention. Recognizing its historical significance, a restoration project was initiated and executed in just 03 months, under the personal supervision of Hon'ble Lt. Governor.

The restoration efforts meticulously focused on preserving the historical character of the gateway. Traditional techniques and materials were used to address structural concerns, clean and repair the facade, and restore the original design elements.



Before



Now

Tomb of Ghiyas-ud-din Balban

Another monument that holds great prominence in Mehrauli Archaeological Park, is the Tomb of Ghiyas-ud-din Balban. Built around 1287 CE. This historical monument holds a special place in Indo-Islamic architecture. Historians believe, it is the site of the first true arch and possibly the first dome ever built in the Islamic style, in India.

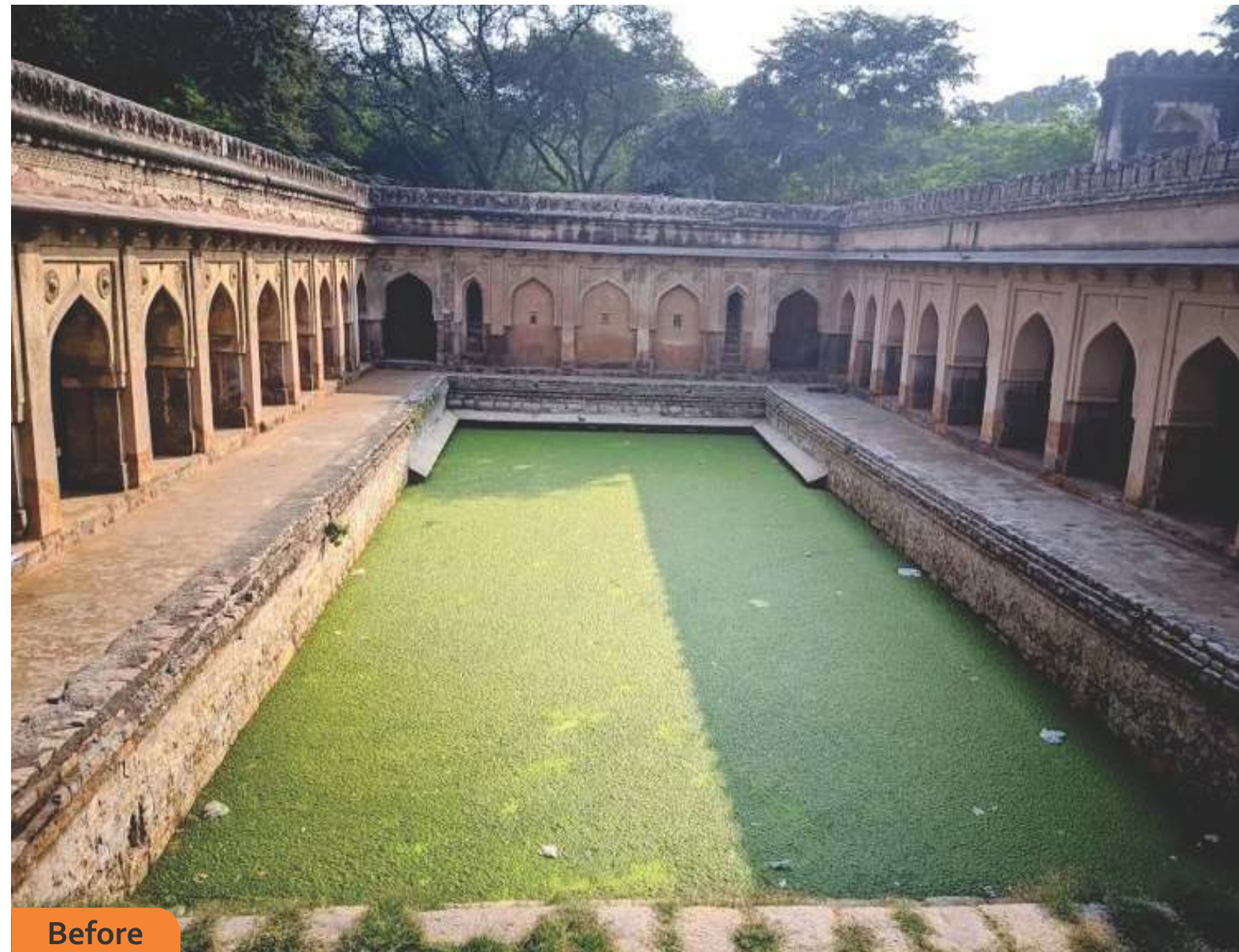
However, time has taken its toll. The once-grand tomb has suffered from harsh weather and neglect, with its domes collapsing and decorations fading. Thankfully, recent restoration efforts by the ASI and DDA aim to preserve this architectural gem and the fascinating story it holds. The conservation, restoration and site development works are on full swing at the site, with the tomb already restored.



Rajon ki Baoli

Built in early 16th Century by Daulat Khan, an official under Sikander Lodi, Rajon ki Baoli is a stunning example of Indo-Islamic architecture. It's a U-shaped stepwell with a natural spring and four descending levels. The Baoli's East and West side boasts of arched colonnades, while the South side has steps leading down to the water. A well with arches sits on the North side. Interestingly, the complex also houses a mosque and a 12-pillared tomb with a glazed dome, both dating back to the Lodhi-era. The entire site is rectangular and adorned with intricate inscribed work and embellishments. For a unique perspective, four staircases lead to the roof, offering a view of the entire structure.

Descending through its four stories, Rajon ki Baoli offered more than just water. It provided a cool escape from the relentless Delhi sun. Intricate carvings once graced its walls, while rest chambers provided havens along the descent. However, time and neglect cast a shadow and the monument began to decay over the years. With persistent efforts, this gem is being brought back to life, allowing visitors to step back into its historic depths.



Before



Now

Jamali Kamali Mosque and Tomb

Within the Mehrauli Archaeological Park complex, stands a unique site built between 1528 and 1529 CE. It consists of two monuments side-by-side; a mosque and a tomb. The tomb honours Jamali, a Sufi saint and poet revered during the Lodi and Mughal empires. Legend says Kamali, buried next to Jamali, was his companion.

Casting a long shadow the Jamali Kamali Mosque, haunted by time, stands as a silent sentinel to an era in Mughal architecture. It is considered a forerunner in its style, showcasing innovative features like the distinctive “Jharokha”-windows. Red sandstone walls adorned with marble accents create a captivating facade.



Before



Now

Quli Khan's Tomb

Nestled within the Park, lies the revitalized Quli Khan's Tomb. This historical monument stands as a testament to the rich architectural heritage of Delhi and the recent restoration efforts undertaken on the initiatives of Hon'ble Lt. Governor. Prior to the initiation of the restoration project, the tomb had suffered from neglect. Vegetation overgrowth, weathered surfaces, and potential structural concerns marred its beauty and historical significance. Recognising its importance, the restoration of Quli Khan's Tomb was taken on a priority.

The project, involved meticulous efforts to preserve the historical integrity of the monument. Traditional techniques and materials were employed to address structural concerns and restore the facade. The surrounding area was also revitalized, with improved landscaping and the restoration of a nearby water body. This holistic approach not only brought the tomb back to its glory but also enhanced the overall visitor experience within the Mehrauli Archaeological Park.



Before



Now

The Unknown Circular Monument

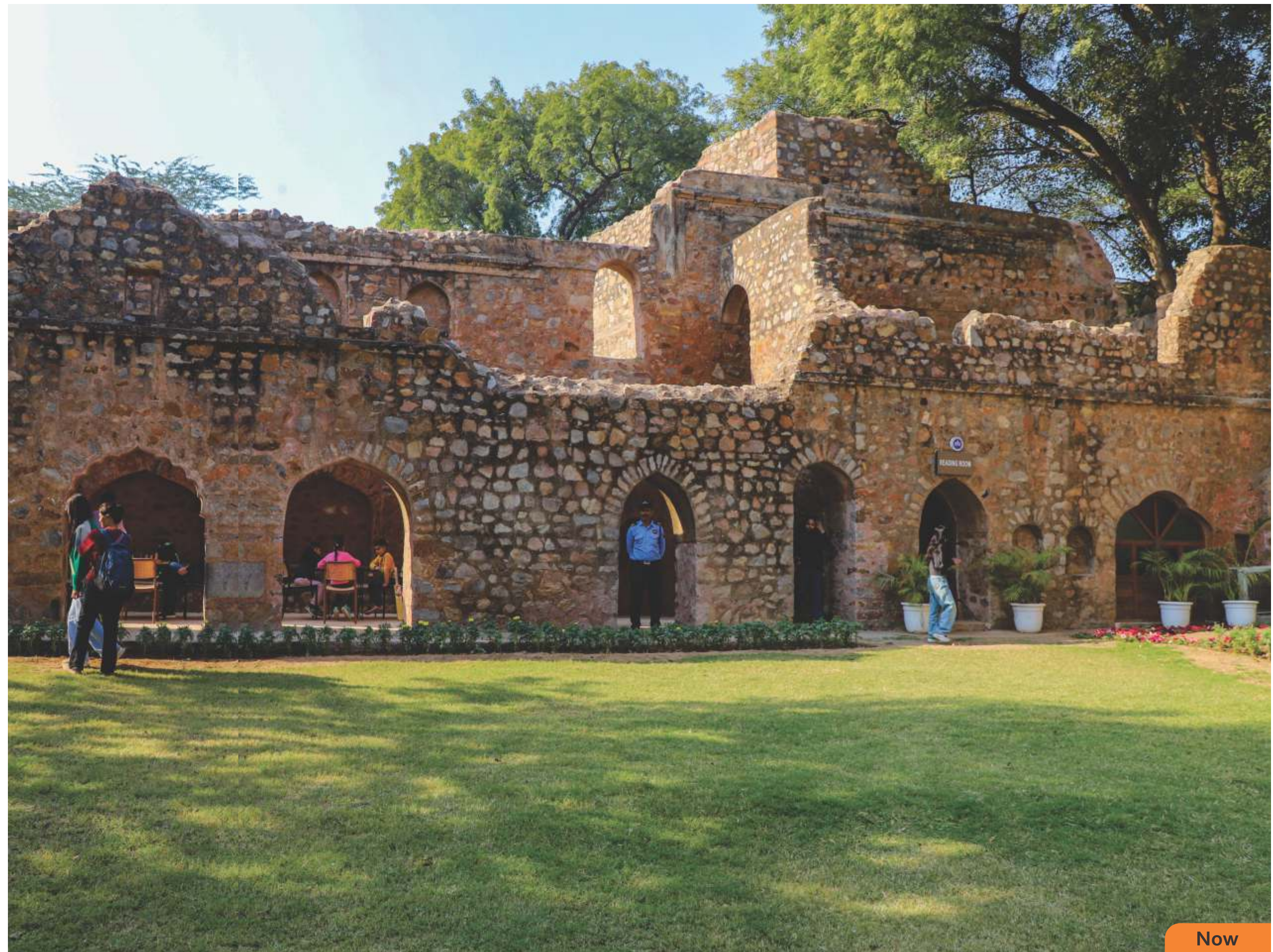
Amidst the historical gems of Mehrauli Archaeological Park, lies a historic structure near the Qutub Minar described as the Unknown Circular Monument. The structure seems to have been a sitting or dining room. The circular inner room has a small decorative fire-place, and spacious shelves. The outer gallery has ledges that might have facilitated the service of food. The roof, of which nothing remains, was probably supported on wooden beams as the slots where they would have fitted can still be seen. This intriguing structure, recently revitalized, presented a unique challenge and an opportunity.

However, the project took a fascinating turn when transformed into a high-end cafeteria- Cafe Stone- within the Park. This innovative approach allows visitors to experience the monument in a new light while fulfilling a practical need within the Park. The Unknown Circular Monument, now a vibrant cafeteria, stands as a symbol of Delhi's commitment to its heritage. Its revitalization highlights the importance of innovative approaches to historical preservation, ensuring these structures remain relevant and continue to captivate visitors for generations to come.



Reading Room

An unknown structure situated near Choumukha Darwaza is now restored and has been utilised as a 'Reading Room' which houses several books about 'History and culture' and some recreational materials like Chess and Carrom to divert public eyes from screens.



Now

Metcalfe's Guest House

Located adjacent to the Quli Khan's Tomb, the ruins of a rectangular structure was once the guesthouse of Metcalfe. 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 fireplace, a deep recessed plunge bath, that abutts the structure.

Located midway in the northern side of the garden enclosure is a former gateway leading to the Qutub Minar. This was converted by Metcalfe into an annex which functioned as guest house. Within this building certain Nineteenth-century features can be seen. The structure is now converted into an Interpretation Centre housing the narrative of the area.



Before



Now

Metcalfe Boat House

Nestled within the Mehrauli Archaeological Park lies a fascinating remnant of Delhi's colonial past - the Metcalfe Boat House. Its history intertwines with the Lodhi period and the innovation undertaken by the British resident, Thomas Metcalfe.

Originally, the structure was a tomb built during the Lodhi dynasty. However, in the 19th century, Thomas Metcalfe, the British resident in the Mughal court, saw its potential for a different purpose. He transformed the tomb into a boathouse, taking advantage of a small, natural lake that lay beside it. This man-made and natural waterbody provided the perfect setting for leisure activities.

The restoration project aimed to painstakingly restore the Metcalfe Boat House to its former glory. This meticulous process involved removing the layers of silt that had accumulated over time. Skilled artisans addressed the damage caused by weather and environmental factors. The goal was to preserve the historical integrity of the structure while restoring its aesthetic appeal.



Before



Now

Metcalfe Gateposts

While the grand monuments of Mehrauli Archaeological Park capture most attention, there exist three Gateposts of the Metcalfe Estate that whisper tales of a bygone era. These Gateposts likely served as the entrances to the Metcalfe Estate - Dilkusha, the summer retreat. The restoration efforts taken under the supervision of Hon'ble LG have brought them back into the spotlight. Restoration efforts have focussed on preserving its structural integrity and enhancing its historical value.

Experts addressed issues like weathering, loose masonry, and vegetation growth. Conservation techniques aimed to retain the original character of the structure. In these structures, the missing gates made of iron are to be installed and one of the gateway would serve as the main entrance for the Mehrauli Archaeological Park.



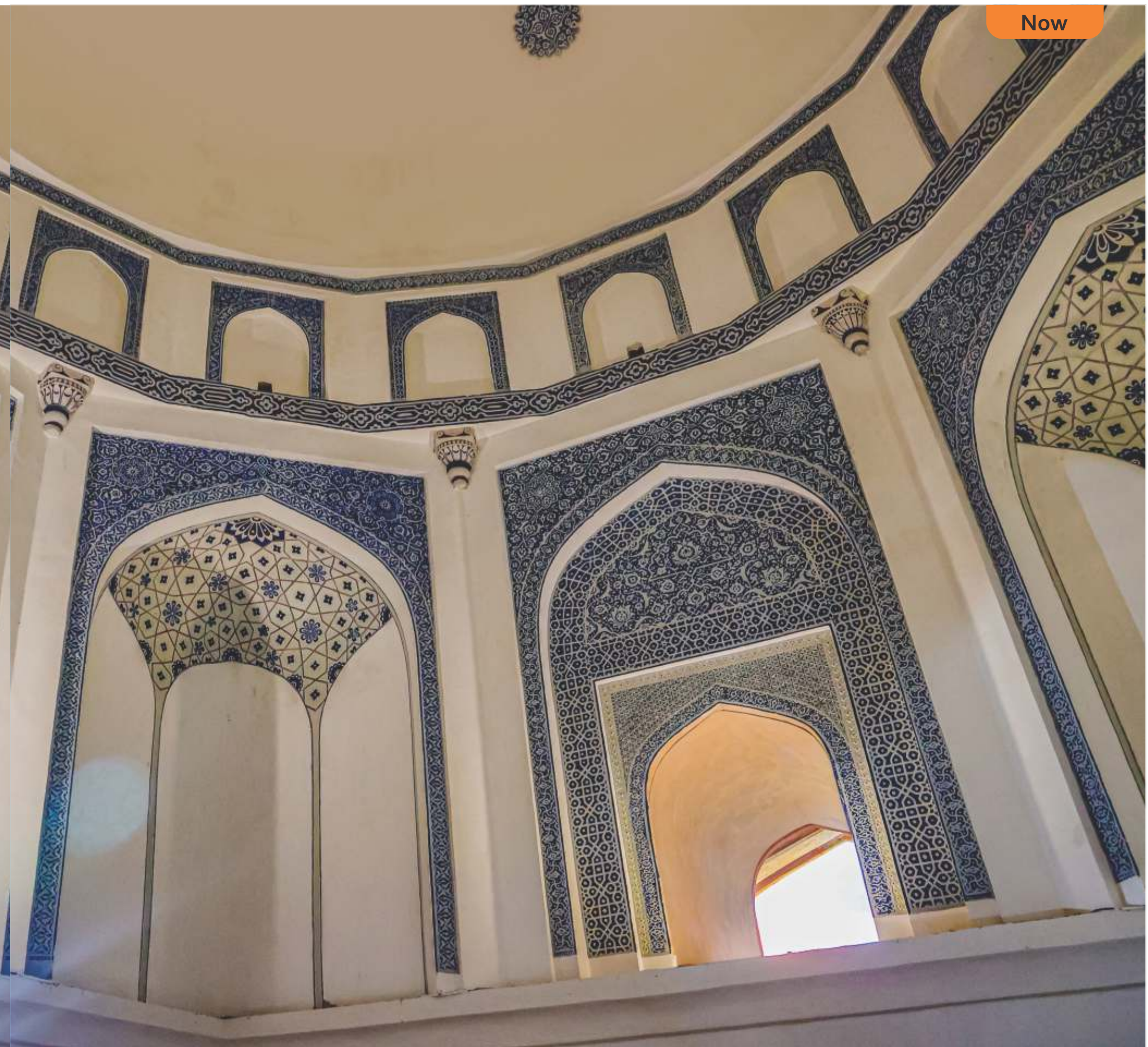
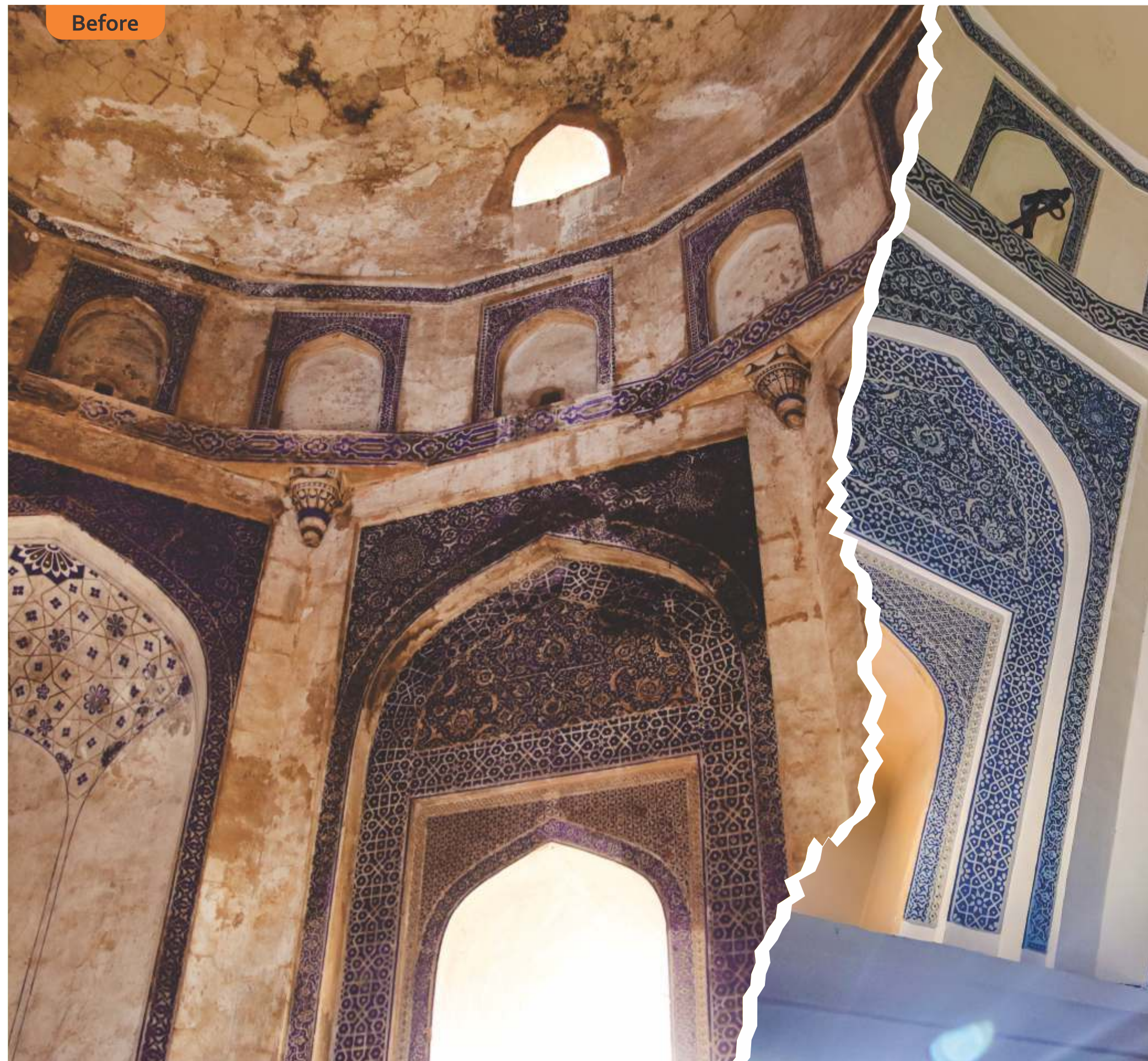
Before



Now



The Transformation



Before



Now





Before



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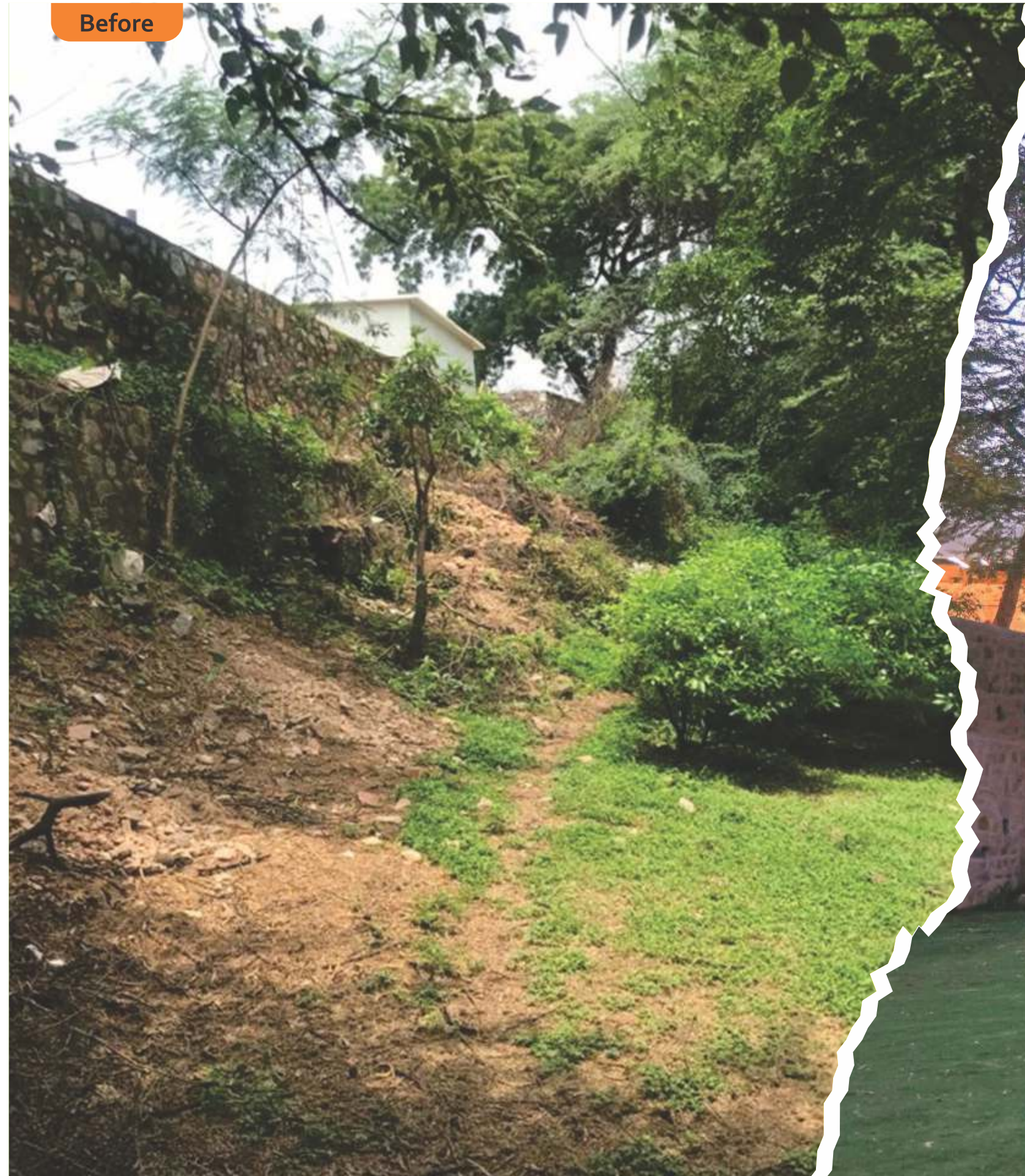


From dilapidation to restoration

From dilapidation to restoration



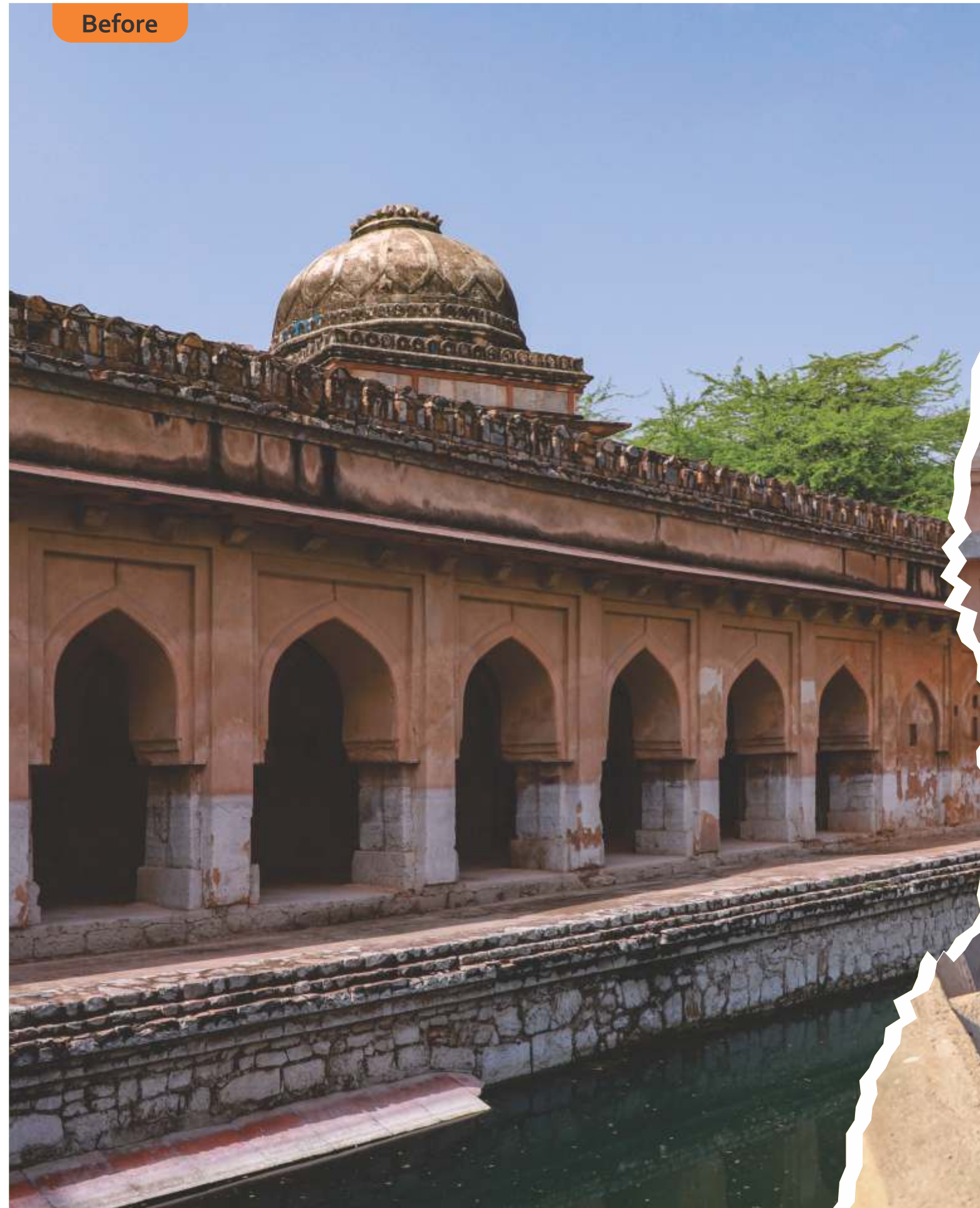
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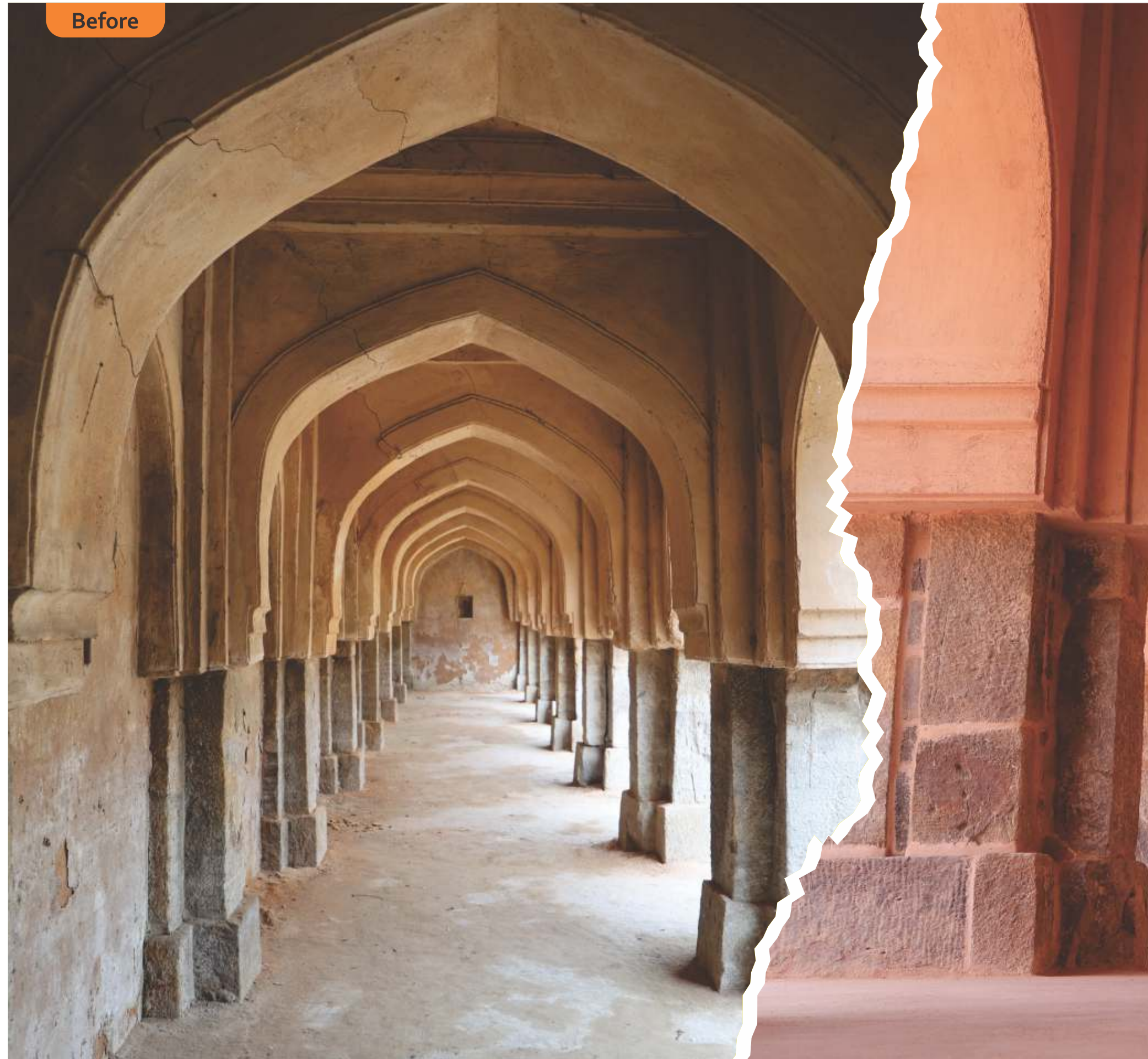
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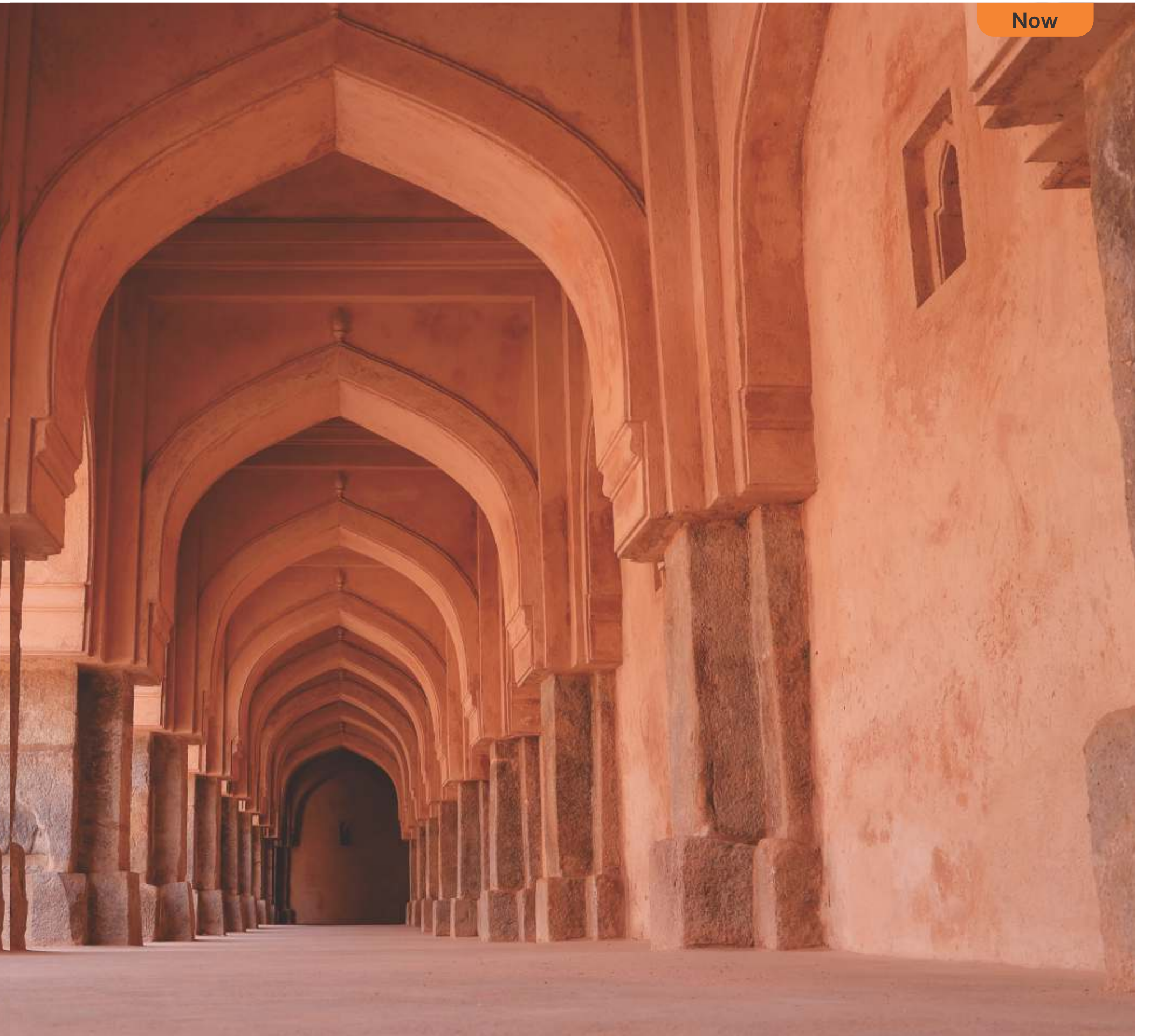
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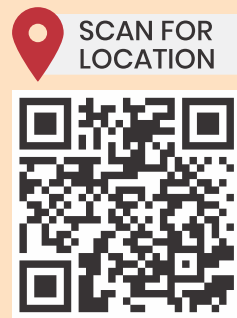
From dilapidation to restoration



Now



and the efforts continue...



MEHRAULI
Archaeological Park
FROM DILAPIDATION TO RESTORATION



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