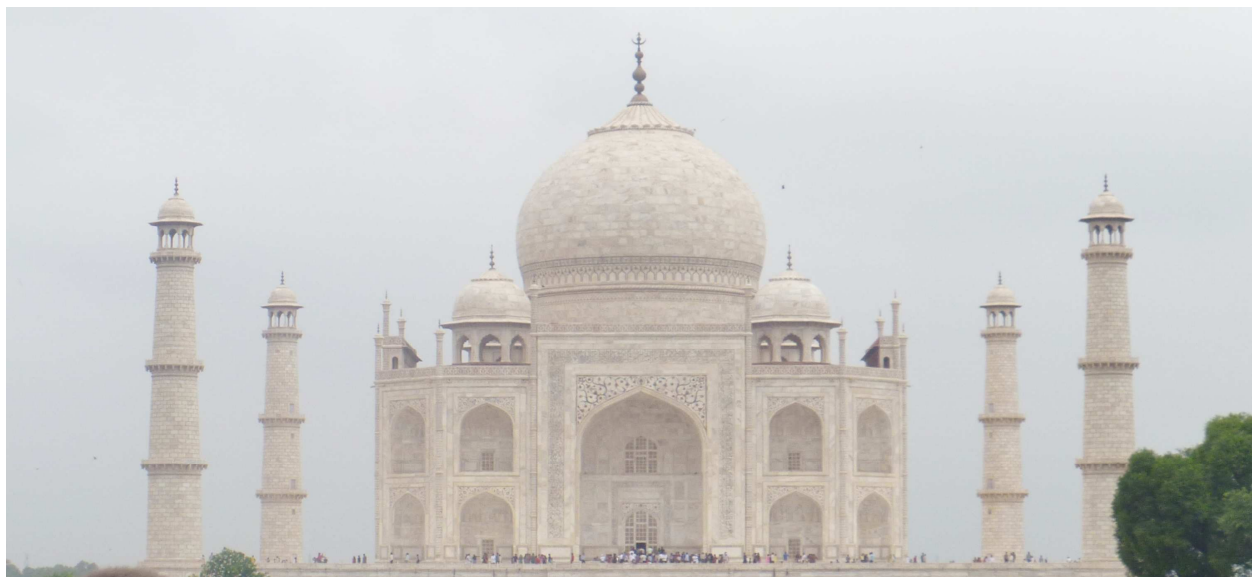


Taj Mahal- A “True Story” –Was It a Love Memorial or Mausoleum?

By: Bipin Shah



Author's Photographs of Taj from distance and close up showing the reflection of light during different Time.

Introduction:

Taj Mahal is often presented as a greatest “Love Memorial” of the world, celebrating the greatest love story of the world. This claim always inspired love and sent honeymooners packing to visit the city of Agra and Delhi. There is nothing wrong with it from Tourism point of view and Taj Mahal still stands as a greatest monument and wonder of the world. There is no denying to this basic fact. The content of tourist presentation does not bring out the real story of how and under what circumstances this monument was created. This article analyzes this with some ancient scripts written during Shah Jahan’s life time and his son Aurangzeb’s letters to him.

How creditable is this love story that an Emperor of India decided to sink vast amount of fortune building this monuments while simultaneously fighting many rebellious provinces and war of succession among his sons ? . Was the land occupied by Taj Mahal, once housed the seven storied Maharaja Manshigh-1’s place who was the nephew of Jodha Bai? Was there a Hindu temple as claimed by some historians?

This article examines all these related issues concerning the erection and construction of Taj Mahal. The author made two separate visits and collected number of pictures to perform the comparative analysis with other monuments.

Mumtaz Mahal was 20th wife of Shah Jahan; No one can claim her to be his “first love”. So, the question is if you are the men’s 20th lover, can you acquire that position of influence to motivate your beloved lover to construct such a monument at such a cost when he has continued to maintain a harem full of wives and concubines? It may be possible but highly improbable. In his case, if all the hype is removed and as the story unfolds of this nomadic race of Moguls, it becomes very clear that was not the case.

The common logic and wisdom suggest that it is very hard to find that such as unusual man who would do that. The circumstances that led to her marriage to Shah Jahan are also very unusual. As customary as it was in those days, the royals of India both Muslims and Hindu used opium regularly and some developed the opium induced life style that turned into physically and mentally unhealthy life style. The large number of wives and concubines added the complexities to this relationship. It was customary that the chief queen along with others would be buried alongside the king or emperor. As powerful Noor Jahan was (Jahangir’s wife) she was buried in Lahore Pakistan at Jahangir’s tomb and not with her family in Agra.

At times the emperors and kings of India were not able to make the right decision for them or for the empire they ruled. The evils of polygamy and patricidal tendencies for succession always followed without any exception that complicated their history.

The author examines two source documents along with other supporting evidence found in Jaipur archives and offers a different version of what he believes is the correct historical events that took place. Ain-I-Akbari gives an insight of Great Akbar's life style and his major military commanders Mansingh-1 of Amber, his nephew by marriage to Jodha Bai.

Abdul Hamid Lahori's work on "Pādšāh-nāmāh" discusses in details 20 years of rules of Shah Jahan and other successive works describe the latter part of Shah Jahan's life. The most important that provides more clear cut information comes from Aurangzeb's numerous letters to Shah Jahan and his sister, documented under the collections called "Adab-i-Alamgiri" by Sadiq Mutt alibi of Ambala. All of these works can be downloaded from Gutenberg archive with proper search engines. These can be obtained through print editions.

The analysis and interpretation of all the above works in its proper context is the key to unraveling the true history and separating the myths. The author has provided a more realistic assessment of the situation by seeking confirmation through secondary sources or if no source exists and did not fit the common sense than the tales are discarded to preserve the historicity. This author rejects the notion that Shah Jahan ordered the hands of artists be cut off after the completion of Taj Mahal. That is just the false tale. Shah Jahan in his last days was highly addicted to opium and mentally depressed and was not involved in day to day of the running of his empire. There was a war of succession among brothers. Aurangzeb was the smartest of all as well as very educated and calculative. The heir to the crown was Dara Sikhoh, almost 90 % Hindu by blood, relation and connection. He made certain decision but he lost due to disloyalty of Muslim Ulemmas, Turkish commanders and courtesans who did not want the resurgence of Hindu power. Aurangzeb cleverly used his other Muslim half brothers and sisters to wrest control of power while confining Shah Jahan in virtual house arrest. Having done that, he fulfilled his commitment to extremist's mullah and commanders who were fundamentalist by implementing harsh laws against his Hindu subjects and loyal Rajput kings who served the empire. The net result was the mogul empire started breaking from the seam and then collapsed with the rise of Marathas and the arrival of British. Aurangzeb's ruthlessness was demonstrated by killing and murderous campaign against all his brother, sister and uncle who can pose a challenge to his power.

Consistent with the predecessor's tradition, Shah Jahan would build mausoleum for him and his family. The grandiose vision comes from Noor Jahan who built the mausoleum greater than Akbar and Humayun with fine architectural values. Shah Jahan's inspiration comes from the memorial of Itimad-Ud- Daula, Akbar and Humayun memorials with some outside influence. When Shah Jahan died, 100 percent of Taj construction probably was not completed that Aurangzeb had to complete.

Background and Sources:

Abdul Hamid Lahori's was first sought out by Shah Jahan as an official Royal Biographer. His first work began at the start of Shah Jahan's eight year in the reign and he completed his first phase with significant details up to the 20th year of Shah Jahan's reign. His work imitates the style of Abu-I-Fazl, the biographer of Great Akbar. His work is officially titled as "Pādšāh-nāmāh" –The Book of Kings. It is also referred by many translators as "Shah Jahan" or "Padshah Nama" using the source material Lahori compiled. More than one person has done the work covering his biography completely in the Persian language (Farsi).

Shah Jahan regarded Akbar as his role model but to what extent he met his virtues remains an open question. His "Love Memorial" stories of Taj Mahal inspired enough tales to ignore other details of his early life, characterized as misdeeds by some historians. However, the point of contention that is raised here, did he built the Taj Mahal for his "Great Love" for Mumtaz Mahal or was it for himself as a continuing tradition of his predecessors?

The facts presented here do not make him equal either in stature to Great Akbar as a ruler or in stature of Great lover of fames of "Romeo-Juliet" or "Laila-Majnu". After critical review, the author finds no evidence from any of the Old Persian work that even suggest that Taj Mahal as anything other than a mausoleum. The label of a "love Memorial" that is given and propagated by colonial historians and today's tourist circuits is a more of hype than the real history.

In reality, it was a resting place for him and his queen. The design was inspired and conceived as a bigger cenotaph than Noor Jahan's father, Itimad-Ud- Daula. Shah Jahan conceived it as an earthly replica of Itimad-Ud-Daula but in grander version that will exceed all other mausoleums built by his predecessors. Since Aurangzeb's time, it became an instrument for propaganda for the emperor's accomplishment as Aurangzeb himself had expanded it.

Abdul Hamid Lahori's was recommended by Allami Sadulla Khan. Lahori who was living in Patna in retirement was recalled by the Shah Jahan. He became the basis for other works on Shah Jahan often collectively referred as Pad shah Nama, Shah Nama. Sirs H. M. Elliot and

Briggs have done extensive translation work for entire Muslim history of India and that includes most of the reliable work on Indian history by Farista and Al-Biruni.

Mohamed Amin bin Abu- I- Hassan Kazwani also known as Amina Munsî or Mirza Amina was the junior and younger writer to finish the remainder work on Shah Jahan's biography who spoke in reverence to the Lahori's work. His work is very voluminous and make up bunch of the volume of Bibliotheca Indica. His work gives the details an enumeration of the princes of the blood royal; of the nobles of the Court, arranged according to their respective ranks, from those commanding 9000 to those of 500 horse (Cavalry Troops) ; and an account of the sheikhs, learned men, scholars, physicians and poets who flourished during the period of Moguls .

The related and relevant excerpt will be extracted from other sources like Ain-I-Akbari and letters of Aurangzeb for this paper. All these sources and other data suggest some salient feature of little understood events of the Mogul's life that existed in medieval ages of India that at times provoked endless conflicts and wars.

The Emperor Shah Jahan used to say:

“At times, I fear that my eldest son (Dara Shukoh) has become the enemy of good men; Murad Baksh has set his heart on drinking; Muhammad Shuja has no good trait except contentment (happy go-lucky). But the resolution and intelligence of Aurangzeb prove that he alone can shoulder this difficult task of ruling India. But there is great sickness and infirmity in his physical frame. (Verse)

Then, whom will he wish for as a friend and to whom will his heart incline?”

We know from the history, his assessment of Aurangzeb turns out right. Dara Shukoh by blood and inclination was allied with Rajputs and he certainly made many Muslim commanders unhappy but he was the eldest son and heir to the throne. Had he survived, the history of Mogul may be different. However, Aurangzeb turns out to be the first “Taliban” of his period and he used the religions for his political purpose of attaining power. Ultimately, the pendulum swings so much towards repression that turned his fortune as well as his empire downward and brought about the beginning of the fall and decline of Mogul empire. What Great Akbar had built, and Jahangir had consolidated was the unity of Hindu and Islam, through their policies collapsed during Aurangzeb's time. Aurangzeb pushed the reforms back and reintroduced harsh and repressive sharia laws on majority of the population. The rise of

Maratha led by Shivaji, the sack of Delhi by Abdali and then arrival of British ended the Mogul period and the history from the sub continent.

Polygamy of Kings and Emperors:

The evils of Polygamy is not only confined to the Moguls of the history but affected all human civilization. Polygamy once was considered an art of diplomacy to cement the peaceful relationship among warring states, kingdoms, and countries. This art of diplomacy was extensively practiced in early Vedic ages and middle ages of Europe and Asia. It was a peace making deal and was designed with an idea that if you give your son or daughter to the opponents in a matrimonial relationship, the tension diffuses. The conflict and aggression becomes irrelevant and dissipates as the future of your progeny will receive the claims anyway due to the formed matrimonial alliance. There will be no purpose to conflict. This was the old concept of “balance of Power “that existed throughout the centuries.

However, it also became the symbol of disunity as the number of matrimonial alliance kept increasing within royal families of India and elsewhere. The discords among half brother princes and other royals who felt that they would themselves be better suited to the role of the king than their half brothers and sometimes their own father, the ruling king.

Colonel Tod, an 18th century, British Political agent of Colonial India and historian observes: **” Polygamy is the fertile source of evil, moral as well as physical. It is a relic of barbarism and primeval necessity, affording a proof that ancient Asia is still young in knowledge. The desire of each wife that her offspring should wear a crown is natural; but they do not wait the course of the nature for the attainment of their wishes and the love of power too often furnishes instrument for any deeds, however based.”**

Colonel Tod forgot to mention that King Henry practiced the same methods along with other monarch of colonial period. One of the worst outcome of the tradition of polygamy was the development of **“Patricidal tendencies among the princes”** that allowed them through court intrigues and aided by the competing queens and their loyal supporters to annihilate the father-ruler and then eliminate all potential competitors, both half brothers and or sisters who can remotely lay the competing claim to the throne for succession.

Jahangir gauged his step brother’s eye Khosrau who was half Hindu and Shah Jahan later killed him to prevent him to make any claim. Aurangzeb upped the scores along with other

horrendous acts by killing all his half brothers and one sister. In addition to that, Aurungzeb imprisoned his father Shah Jahan in solitary confinement until he died.

These acts were not uncommon among Muslim rulers of India but were also practiced among the Hindu rulers. These acts sowed the seeds of discord, disunity and conflicts. Colonel James Tod who wrote the annals and antiquity of Rajasthan brought this out as a major weakness among the Rajput kings and rulers that brought about long domination by Muslim invaders. He also commented about the excessive lust for women that some rulers exhibited by maintaining several hundred wives and concubines. Even the Great Akbar was not exempt from this lust.

The Great Akbar just like his ancestors and predecessors maintained a large harem. Moguls after all descended from Mongols, Tartars and Turks who were nomads of central Asia. Akbar's motives during the wars of aggression against various Hindu rulers was to appropriate their queens, daughters and sisters. He also demanded their princes to attend the royal courts of the Moguls. This tactics made them permanent fiduciary to the emperor.

The women of Rajputana preferred "Jauhar" (Fire immolation) than to be captured and disrespectfully treated as servants and prostitutes in Akbar's harem as Rani Padmini's example illustrates during Allauddin Khilji's attempt to bring her to his harem.

Vincent Smith's work further gives us the insight of the Chagatai's descendants, Timur and Moguls. Chagatai Khan was the Grandson of Chengiz Khan and Tamerlane was his descendants and Babur's lines of Moguls were half Turk-Tartars and half Mongolians who descended from Timur lane's lineage.

“Intemperance was the besetting sin of the Timuroid royal family, as the Moguls descended from them. Timur himself descended from Chagatai who descended from notorious Chengiz Khan who was well renowned for piling up human skeleton after his slaughter. Babur himself lived to Timur and Chengiz fame and he was also an elegant toper of human skulls.”

Humayun acted stupid with his high opium addiction. Akbar permitted himself to the practices of all vices that Aurungzeb also faithfully followed. Akbar's two sons died in early manhood from intoxication induced by chronic alcoholism. One of their elder brothers was saved from the same fate by a strong constitution, and not by a Muslim prayer, Hazz or divine help from Allah or through any available medicine. With such an atmosphere of the lofty life style, it is difficult to accept that Akbar was a "a Great Mogul" as some modern historian

describe him. Akbar's own historian Abdul Fazl would not agree with that blanket statement without some qualification. Abdul-I-Fazl practically spent all his life with him. In a comparative sense, Akbar should be given the credit that he tried to develop a true secularity like Asoka, meaning tolerance of all faiths in India. How much of that came from his heartfelt beliefs or practical necessity to keep calm and preserve peace in his empire is the secret he kept with him and is buried in his Sikandara. Jahangir on the other hand picked the fight with Sikhs with whom Akbar maintained the cordial relationship.

Col. Tod wrote "Babur after defeating Rana Sunga at Fatehpur Sikri raised a triumphal pyramid of the heads of the slain Rajput heroes of Chittore, and on a hillock which overlooked the field of the battle, a tower of skulls was erected and the conqueror Babur thereafter assumed the title of Ghazi."

Abdul Fazl in Ain-i-Akbari states "His majesty Akbar had established liquor Bar in the palaces of Agra and Sikri. The prostitutes of the city gathered at the ancient bar near small fountain. (The numbers of them were the dancing girls as depicted in many Indian movies.) At the conclusion of the show many girls can be taken home by the courtiers. The virgin dancing girls needed Akbar's personal approval before granting this privilege to any courtier requesting that. His Majesty, the Great Akbar often inquired of the dancing girls who deprived them of their virginity? This was the state of affairs during Great Akbar's rule, where alcoholism, sodomy, prostitution and murderous assaults were permitted by the Akbar himself."

This tradition continued through all his successors up to the last one, Bahadur shah who was usurped by British.

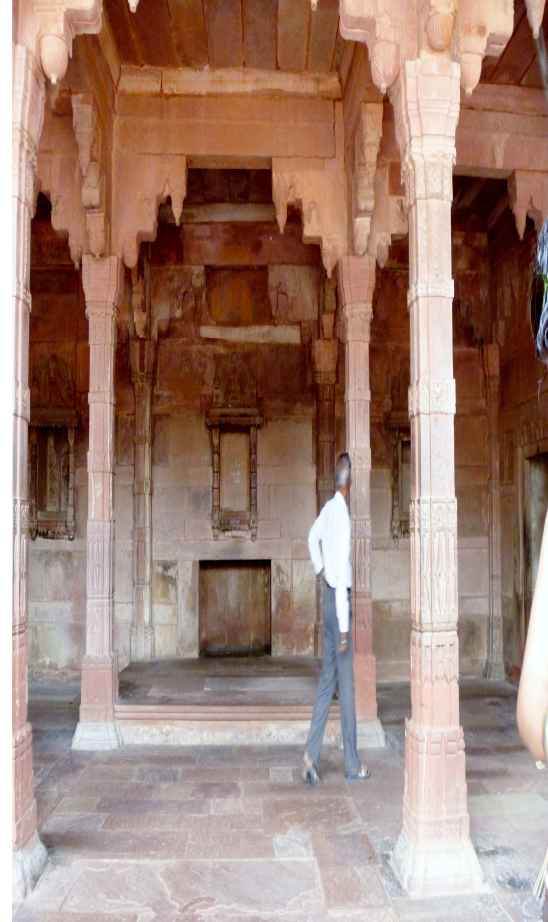
We can further conclude from this that The Christian priest who accompanied the Portuguese traders on a their first trade voyage to India and visited Noor Jahan and Jahangir learned that both drinking and engaging in debauched sexual activities was inherited by Akbar from his nomadic ancestors.

Buddhist Asoka of India behaved the same way under the influence of "soma" liquor and mistreated women and have them killed when they did not comply. Sodomy was very common practice among Muslim slave dynasty of Turks. Babur, Akbar's grandfather, has given a lengthy description of his sodomic infatuation for a male sweetheart. Humayun was no different. Abdul Fazal in Ain-e-Akbari provides accounts of some such acts which are too disgusting to even mention. Such method of gratification was so common during the Mogul rule, among the ancient Turks, Greeks and Roman military world. Under the slave dynasty,

the boys prostituted themselves, and the influence of alcohol overruled the common human decency and the resulting madness lead to bloodshed like a nasty brawls in the bar. The most notable Malik kafur was the “boy” of Allauddin Khillji who ultimately poisoned him. The Great Alexander was no exception with his friend Hephaestion. This is not to condemn the accepted and civilized relationship accepted under the current law of different countries.



Dancing Girls at the court



Sikri- Evening gathering place for entertainment

Hira Kunwari aka Jodha Bai aka Mariam-Uz-Zamani of Amber (Jaipur)

Hira Kunwari was the maiden name of the daughter of Kachhwa Rajput King of Amer/Amber, She was the daughter of king Bharmal of Amber and the sister of Bhagwandas of the (Jaipur) and also the aunt of Great Mansingh-1. Mansingh-1 becomes, one of the nine jewels of Akbar’s court. Bhagwandas and Mansingh-1, both of them occupied the highest office in Mogul court. Akbar's marriage with Hira Kunwari had far-reaching effect on Hindu-Muslim relation. It led Akbar to take a much more favorable view of Hinduism and his Hindu subjects.

In a marriage of political alliance, Hira Kunwari was married to Akbar during 1562 AD at Sambhar near Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

Hira later was known as “Jodha Bai” of the “Jodha-Akbar” movie. She was the third wife of Akbar after Ruqaiya Sultan (first wife) and Salima Sultan Begums (second). Salima was the widowed wife of his most trusted general Bairam Khan. Akbar felt obliged to take care of her after Bairam Khan’s death. Hira Kunwari remained Hindu all her life but was still honored with the title “Mariam-uz-Zamani” (Mother Mary of the Age) after she gave a birth to son Jahangir, the future emperor of India. Despite her being a non-Muslim wife, she held great respect and honor in the Mughal household. Miriam, as the mother of the heir-apparent, took precedence over all the other wives of Akbar and she was given the largest residential quarter. The Sikri guides often get confused with Miriam as a Christian wife but Akbar had no Christian wife but he equated her as “Mother Mary” that is still being held in high esteem by Moslems.



Hira Kunwari or Jodha Bai's palace at Sikri



Painting Depiction of Jodha Bai Sikri



Miniature art of Hira Kunwari and Akbar



Hira Kunwari's Tomb within Akbar's Sikandara (Tomb)



Hira Kunwari of Amber aka Jodha Bai aka Miriam's Tomb Plaque

Akbar's marriage with Hira Kunwari or Jodha Bai had far-reaching effect in public policies and promotion of secularity of religions. Akbar nearly abandoned the hard core Islam and sharia laws in preference of mufti and surrounded with the adviser and trusted aides like Abdul Fazl and Hindu Raja Bilbar. Akbar took a much more favorable view of Hinduism and other reformist sects of India like Jainism and Buddhism. Akbar also changed Just like Asoka of India, after violent campaigns in his early life, the custom of Hindu rulers offering their daughters for marriage to Muslim rulers became more acceptable in the country for several centuries. Yet Akbar's marriage to princess of Amber/Amer was a significant event of the time, as an early indication of his evolving policy of religious tolerance. As a fringe benefit to the rulers of Amber, the marriage with their princess secured the powerful support of her family throughout the Mogul rule until Aurungzeb arrived at the scene.

Raja Birbal's name was Mahesh Das (1528–1586 AD). He was a Hindu advisor in the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar during his rule in India and is mostly remembered in folk lore's, which focus on his wit. He belonged to the Brahmin class and was appointed by the Emperor as a poet and singer around 1556–1562 AD, later formed a close association with him, becoming an important advisor and soon being sent on military expeditions despite having no previous military experience. The title of Raja was conferred to him by Akbar even though he did not rule a territory or held any royal lineage.

There is a great deal of confusion as to the number of matrimonial alliances between moguls and House of Amber. The Ain- I- Akbari by Abdul Fazl Allami clarifies that:

“In addition to the marriage of great Akbar with Jodha Bai who was the daughter of Raja Bharmal, the daughter of Bhagwandas and niece of Jodha Bai, also was married to Jahangir.”

Man Singh-1 was 5 to 6 years younger than Akbar and was given a title of “Mirza Raja” by Akbar Himself. He was also known with the title of “Farzand” (equal to son or just like a son) as he was the nephew of Jodha Bai, and was given the command of 5,000 of best of Mogul troops. He fought for Akbar on many fronts including the battle at Haldighat with Rana Pratap who was also the relative of Man Singh-1. After Man Singh’s victory over Afghan near Mursidabad, Emperor Akbar promoted him to a (full) command of Seven Thousand troops that was the maximum allowed under the Mogul military ranks of promotion. It was noticeable that Akbar in raising Mansingh to the command of Seven Thousand placed a Hindu above every Mohmudian Military commander. Mansingh died a natural death in the 9th year of Jahangir’s reign whilst in the campaign in south India. **Up on his pile death, sixty of his fifteen hundred wives said to have committed Johor and burned themselves on the funeral.** Akbar also had granted him the land on which he build the palace on the bank of Yamuna that ultimately becomes the site of Taj Mahal that Abdul-I-Fazl confirms that.

Jahangir’s Family:

As per Ain-I-Akbari compiled by Abdul Fazl, Jahangir was half Hindu son of Akbar by Jodha Bai. Jodha Bai’s niece and daughter of her brother Bhagwan Das were married to Jahangir and gave birth to a girl and sons named Prince Khosrau and younger Madhu singh. She poisoned herself with opium in a fit of madness apparently brought on by the behavior of Khosrau and her younger brother Madhu Singh, as per the chronicler of Akbar. Jahangir had many wives and concubines but most important was Noor Mahal or popularly known as Noor Jahan, 20th of his wife.

Jahangir’s children were:

1. Sultan Khosrau from a niece of Jodha Bai. 2. Sultan Parwiz. 3. Sultan Khurram (Shah Jahan). 4. Sultan Jahandár. 5. Sultan Shahriyar. Noor Jahan has arranged to marry one of her daughter Ladli to Shahriyar while her niece Arjumand Banu Begum (known as Mumtaz Mahal) to marry Prince Khurram (the third son of Jahangir and the future Emperor Shah Jahan).

Two daughters of Jahangir are also mentioned: (a) Sultana Unnisa Begum (b) Sultan Bahar Banu Begum. There were ‘several children’ after Parwiz; but the genealogy author Tuzuk, does not provide any details through Padshah Nama but only suggests that either they

appear to have died soon after their birth or raised by number of concubines of lesser importance.

Shah Jahan:

We can now conclude that Shah Jahan was almost 75 % Hindu by blood due to matrimonial relationship with House of Amber (Jaipur). Up on Hearing the death of his father Jahangir, he now cast aside all honor and shame , he abandoned his mission to South India , he repudiated his order from the emperor and his allegiance, and went off in real haste to Lahore to pursue his own interests to capture the Mogul's throne. Noor Jahan, who had been the cause of much strife and contention, now clung to the vain idea of retaining the reins of government in her hand while Jahangir was ailing through her favorite Shahriyar. She wrote to "Na-Shudani" (No good) - Shah Jahan, advising him to collect as many men as he could, and return without any indication of her favor. Shah Jahan knew that Noor Jahan disliked him and made him feel very little by manipulating his father. After all she was largely responsible for earning the title of "Na-Shudani"-Not good for anything because of her.

Asaf Khan and Iradat Khan, who always acted in unison were determined that since Shah Jahan was far way from Agra, it was necessary to take some steps to prevent disturbances in the city, and to get possession of the princes Muhammad Dara Shukoh, Muhammad Shah Shuja, and Muhammad Aurangzeb, all younger Sons of Shah Jahan if Noor Jahan decided to mount a succession struggle on behalf of Shahriyar.

Noor Jahan was the influential wife of Emperor Jahangir. Noor Jahan became concubine of Jahangir when her husband lost the favor of the emperor and then remained as one of the many wives. She had the children and was well versed in the skill of the administration, politics, economics, and culture. At the time of her marriage Noor Jahan was considered a middle aged woman. After the formal marriage, Noor Jahan acquired all the rights of sovereignty and governance, as an empress of India within nine years, becoming virtually in charge of the whole empire until the emperor died in 1627 AD. The key to her success was Jahangir's addiction to both drugs and alcohol and his adoration for Noor Jahan above everyone else in his vast Harem. Jahangir needed Noor to help maintain his health and the empire.

Jahangir wanted Khosrau, his blinded brother or Khosrau's son Bulaki to assume the emperorship after his death. However, Noor Jahan had a different idea and she preferred Shahriyar first and "Na-Shudani" Shah Jahan second, so she can wield her own power behind the scenes. Asaf khan and Irdat khan tried to take Bulaki out of harm's way as the princes

were not safer with Noor Jahan. After Bulaki was raised to the throne, he was placed in the hand of Sadik Khan who was loyal to Noor Jahan and that was a mistake.

They therefore resolved that for some few days they would raise Bulaki to the throne, the son of Khosrau, who, by Noor Mahal's contrivance, had been placed with Na-Shudani, but who had been put under the charge of Iradat Khan by Jahangir until Na-Shudani returned from Kashmir to assume the power. So they placed Bulaki on horseback, and, with a party of men in whom they had full confidence, they commenced their march, taking care to keep one day ahead of Noor Jahan. The rest of the story unfolds as Shah Jahan eliminated Khosrau, Bulaki and other opponents who can possibly challenge him with the help of Persian aristocrats.

Keen Interest in Arts:

Both Jahangir and Noor Jahan were devotees of the elegant and sophisticated Indo-Persian arts and architectural style, the Taj Mahal being one of the fine examples even though they did not built it. The emperor owned an admirable collection of exquisite miniature paintings and together with Noor, constructed beautiful gardens, notably in the court's summer retreat in Kashmir. Noor used same gardens for official functions; others were opened up for the populous in general for use. Architecture, too, was an important imperial activity; some of the mosques, caravansaries and tombs Noor Jahan had built are visible today. So, the architectural inspiration for Taj Mahal comes from Noor Jahan, the imperial interior decorator of arts, Empress Noor Jahan herself.

Raja Mansingh-I Palace in Agra:

Akbar's disastrous decision to move capital to Sikri and then back to Agra at a great expense and his requirement that Man Singh attend daily the mogul court required him to build a palace in Agra at the same place where Taj Mahal stands. Ain-I-Akbari confirms that directly:

“The ground, on which the Taj Mahal at Agra stands, once belonged to Man Singh-1 of Amber”.

Another supporting evidence comes from “A D A B - I - ' A L A M G I R I” regarding Mansingh palace in Agra. Vincent John Adams Flynn who had researched this also claims that similar references are found in two other chronicles titled, 'Yadgarnama', and the 'Muruqqa-i-Akbarabadi'.

The letter was written by Prince Aurangzeb while on a military campaign to Multan to his father dated around 1650 AD. The content of the letter is authentic and consistent of his time reflecting the cordial relationship that existed between son and father and discusses freely other affairs of the state of concern to the empire. The most eye catching information is the embellishment of the palace at Shahjahanabad, and the repair and maintenance of the "The Luminous tomb" of Mumtaz Mahal at Agra. He described that as 7 story place that resembles 7 storied palaces built by mansingh-1 during Akbar's time. In one of the letters, Aurangzeb records in itself that the several rooms on the second storey, the secret rooms and tops of the seven storey ceilings have all absorbed water through seepage and were so old that they were all leaking, while the dome had developed a crack on the northern side. Aurangzeb ordered immediate repairs at his expense while recommending to the emperor that more elaborate repairs such as the roof be opened up and redone with mortar, bricks and stone.

This suggest and that an earlier version of the Taj Mahal was built over as Mausoleum using Raja Mansingh' palace and not as grand as the current Taj Mahal is today. Considering, the Mansingh's love for water view as seen in his pick of Amber place, a site near Jaipur, he most likely to build a palace structure with a view of Yamuna River. The seven stories make some sense, as the two to three story reinforcement had to build to raise the palace at the ground level so the flooding will not cause the damage to living quarters. It can be assumed that, the lower levels were occupied by animals, horses and elephants and servants while upper quarter were located on the ground level. Although, we do not know the exact location of the Mansingh' palace but the raised platform for Taj Mahal to such a height raises the suspicion that the old structures lies beneath the raised platform of Taj Mahal. There is no way anyone will be permitted to excavate under Taj Mahal's high platform to prove or disprove what has been suggested in the Aurungzeb's letter. The multiple sources including Jaipur's royal archive confirms that the claim is very authentic. Therefore, it should be regarded as very authentic.

Temple Location:

As far as the location of temple goes of floor plan of the old palace, one can safely assume that just like Amber fort, there was a Hindu Temple probably at the entrance. Since Rajput Kings of Amber were Vishnu/Krishna worshipper, it will contradict the Trishul story of Shiva Temple as advocated by some writers. Mansingh also built the Amber fort so the Vishnu temple would be located in front of the building as you enter the palace. We do not know for sure if it was either on right or left side after the entrance of the Taj.

WIKI on Mansingh has a slightly different version. They acknowledge the seven storied structure, but the location is Vrindavan and not Shahjahanabad. But, this can be the problem of naming. Muslim always renamed Hindu places of worships, city and towns. We don't know the older definition of Vrindavan and how much area that includes along the River Yamuna. The wording becomes irrelevant here.

“Raja Man Singh was a devotee of Shri Krishna. He had a seven-storied temple of Krishna constructed at for Srila Rupa Goswami, disciple of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, in Vrindavan. The cost of construction was one crore rupees at that time. Akbar is also believed to have donated the red sandstone for this temple. Aurangzeb later demolished three stories of this temple. The four-storey temple is still present at Vrindavan. He also constructed a temple of Krishna at his capital, Amber. The place is now known as "Kanak Vrindavan" near Amber Ghati of Jaipur. He constructed the temple of Shila Devi at Amber Fort”.

When compared this with another WIKI on Vrindavan, it states that it is believed that the essence of Vrindavan was lost over time until the 16th century, when it was rediscovered by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. In the year 1515, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu visited Vrindavan, with purpose of locating the lost holy places associated with Lord Sri Krishna's transcendent pastimes. Chaitanya wandered through the different sacred forests of Vrindavan in a spiritual trance of divine love. It was believed that by His divine spiritual power, He was able locate all the important places of Krishna's pastimes in and around Vrindavan.

Here the connection of current four story temple at another location in general area built in 17th century talks about Raja Madho Singh without the name of Mansingh-1 or Akbar, so this is more applicable to relocated site from the original site where Taj stands today.

We have the necessary authenticity through Ain-i-Akbari, Adab-Alamgir and Jaipur's Royal archives to confirm the original location at Taj prior to its relocation during Aurangzeb's time. At the entrance of Fort Amber/Amer to the right of the stairway steps is the Sila Devi temple where the Rajput Maharajas offered worship, starting with Maharaja Mansingh in the 16th century till the 1980s. Sila Devi is another incarnation of Ambika, kali or Durga who were considered consort of Siva. There is also evidence that Vishnu temple was also located inside the palace ground. See picture.

It is possible that Aurangzeb at his own expense carried out further repairs to either remodeled Palace or earlier version of Taj that may have given the looks the Taj presently have.

Aurangzeb's Rule:

Aurangzeb at the age of 40 was most experienced commanders of the Islamic world, when in 1658 AD; he triumphed in Samugarh and imprisoned his once-respected father in the fort of Agra. Aurangzeb was a learned man but barbaric in tendency but as a writer, he was elegant and very fluent in Persian language and always displayed his wit as exhibited in his various letters and other Fermans that were issued under his name. Prince Aurangzeb mentions his mother Mumtaz Mahal several times and acknowledges his three full sisters who were Jahanara (1614-1681), Roshanara (1617-1671) and Gauharara (1631-1706). It was the birth of his last sister that killed her mother Mumtaz Mahal.

Aurangzeb lacked that warmth, the generosity of the heart and the chivalry of Akbar to fallen foes, and Akbar's easy familiarity of humility in his private life, which made the great Akbar win the love and admiration of his contemporaries and of all his posterity. Like the English

Puritans, Aurangzeb drew his inspiration from the old law of Sharia of relentless punishment and vengeance and forgot that **mercy is an attribute of the Supreme Judge of the Universe.**

Mumtaz is believed to have died around 1631 AD as is commonly believed that the cause of her death was the complication the deliverance of the last baby daughter of Aurangzeb. It is believed that it took nearly 22 years to construct the Taj Mahal. We have on record a letter from Prince Aurangzeb a year earlier dated to 1652 AD.

Aurangzeb wrote several letters to his father first claiming his favoritism to his Hindu son Dara Sikhoh who was set to become the emperor and he conspired with the noble men by calling his elder brother as **“infidel Hindu”** not worthy of the crown due to his Hindu blood line. In pursuit of his power, he misled and recruited other Muslim prince brothers and a sister to his enterprise to dethrone his father and eliminate Dara Sikhoh. He succeeded in his enterprise with the help of his brothers and loyal commander. After his accomplishments, he created several excuses to justify the killing of his Muslim brother and sisters to eliminate the competition who aided him to overthrow his father.

Out of all Moguls, Aurangzeb was probably the well educated and very intelligent ruler but he did have the modern **“Taliban mentality”** at his heart and he destroyed many Hindu places of worship, disrespected many Rajput nobles that served his fathers and Akbar, like Jaswant singh Rathore of Jodhpur, Durga Prasad and Rai singh of Amber, the home of Jodha Bai. He leaned towards extremism by reintroducing “Jizya” tax on Hindu (Idolater’s tax), that destroyed the cordiality that was cultivated by Akbar and his successors towards the people of India who practiced different faiths than his. He piled on his oppressive method that gave birth and the rise of the Maratha and Shivaji and ultimately cost him his dynasty and his empire. That ended the Mogul history.

Maharaja of Amber-Jaipur retains in his possession **his secret personal ‘Kapad Dwara’ (Under seal-not to be opened-top secret-your eyes only) collection of two orders (Fermans) from Shah Jahan dated Dec 18, 1633 that are requisitioning Raja Mansingh (Mansubedar) to grant the building complex where Taj stands for Mumtaz’ burial.** Raja Mansingh would not publish that because it would be considered a blatant usurpation to Moguls. The letter does not mentions what other lands will be exchanged in return. This made the Raja Rai Singh angry who was then in charge of Amer/Amber fort.

What has been to the pride of Rajputs of Rajasthan by Muslim Mogul is a shame and not permitted under Holy Koran under any pretext and those holding this mentality will achieve the same date as Mogus of India. It is very disturbing that Congress led government distorts the true history of India and allows the glorification of falsehood of the true history. Hopefully, this article will keep the story as it should be told and taught in our schools.

Amber Palace at Jaipur:

Amber palace at Jaipur was built by Same Raja Mansingh-I, the Mansubedar of Akbar. The inside view of the place from court yard and outside view of the fort are presented below.



View of Amber Palace from outside built by Raja Mansingh -1



Court yard View of Amber Palace from outside built by Raja Mansingh -1

The logic bears out that cumulative evidence presented here shows that Raja Mansingh had a palace in Agra where Taj Mahal is presently situated but not at the scale or size of the fort of Amber/Amer or in that grandeur because he lived there temporarily when attending the Mogul court otherwise he was busy fighting the wars for Moguls.

Various accounts suggests that the place where Taj Mahal stood was a seven storied Palace of Raja Mansingh-1 and was constructed out of red stone (Fatehpur Sikri) style and was probably seven storied high, partly due to raising the foundation over River Yamuna. There

are no verifiable certainties that the exact location can be fixed without excavation and that will not be permitted due to variety of reasons. However, one can imagine Raja Mansingh palace may have been situated beyond the front gate but probably not at the edge of the river where Taj stands with a small court yard typical of Amber place. As far as if the land was granted initially to Mansingh-1 by Akbar that was taken away by Shah Jahan for constructing Taj Mahal, the Fermans speak for themselves.

After all once they were the blood relatives. There must be enough give and take that they may have rebuilt the palace somewhere else. More pictures of Amber fort is found at this web site: http://indiatourism.ws/rajasthan/amer_fort/

It was very common and customary that every Royal palace of Rajasthan contained the clan's temple deities Shiva, Ambika, Krishna, Sila, kali or many others goddesses. At the entrance of Amber palace, we do have the temple. Similarly, the Chittore ford also had temple of Vishnu and other Hindu goddesses. So, it should be no surprise that once Mansingh palace at Agra had some temple idols worship. As far as the official record suggests that Mansingh was the worshipper of Krishna or Vishnu. Raja Mansingh was just few years younger than Great Akbar and became good friend of Akbar and sometimes for fun jostled together by staging a wrestling match as depicted in the painting below.



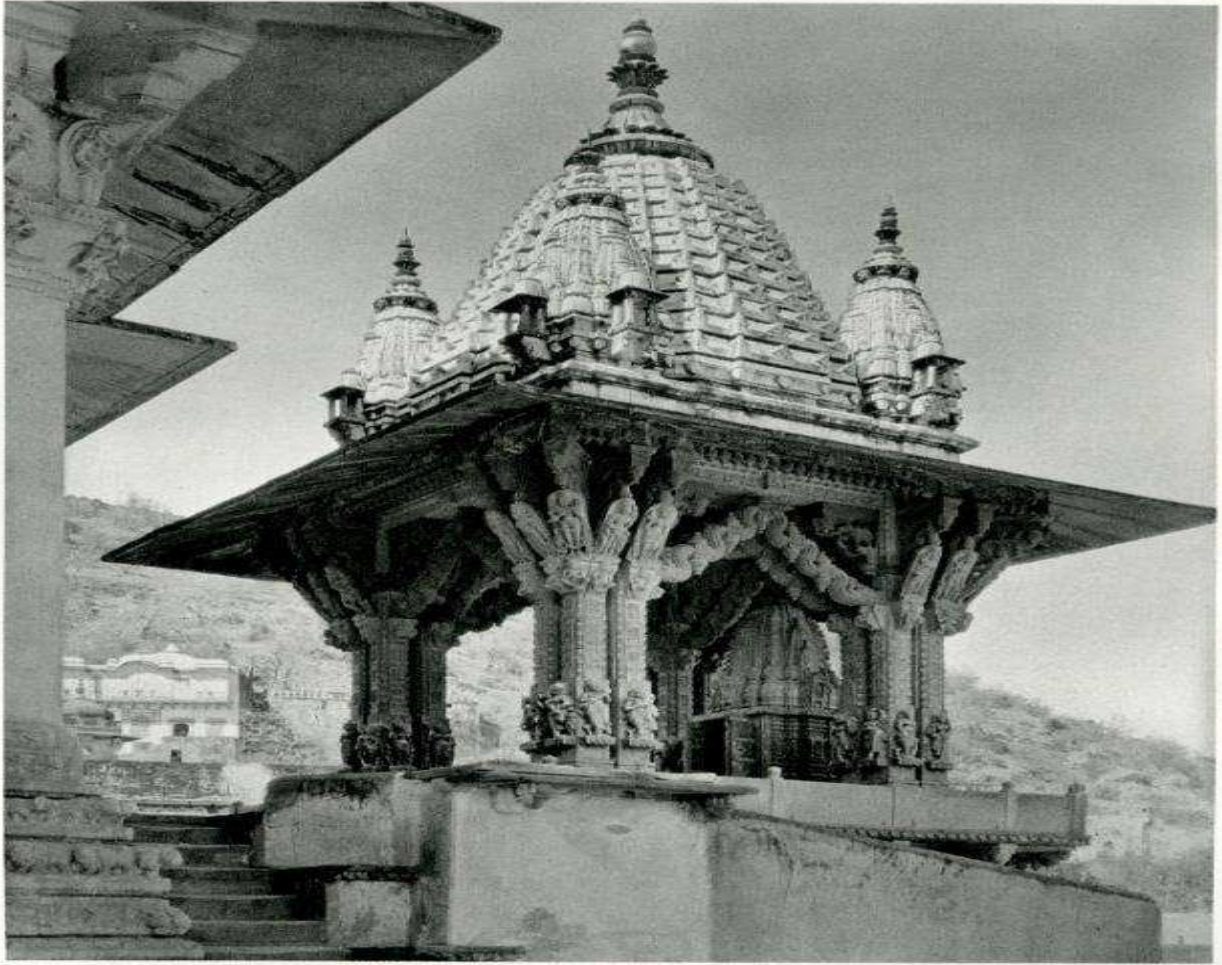
Raja Mansingh-1 Of Amber/Amer



Man singh & Akbar in dueling fun match

Mr. P.N. Oak's assertion that the Taj Mahal was actually "Tejo Mahalaya", a Shiva temple-palace is hard to justify based on the evidence presented here. Abdul Hamid's statement in that respect is more accurate where he says that the Taj Mahal was one a palace that housed

a temple. It was very common and customary with all the Royal clans and Royal Palaces of the Rajasthan. It means the temple complex existed within the palace complex. The palace at the Agra was not an exception to this rule. He is more accurate in his description. It is clear that the place was requisitioned by the Moguls from Jaipur Maharaja Jayasinh. You cannot say “No” to imperial Fermans irrespective of your personal like or dislike.



Original Vishnu temple at Amber fort built by Mansingh -1

Shiva and Vishnu were both worshipped by Royals of Rajputana along with many Goddesses. Eklingji temple dated to 8th century AD near Udaipur is the Shiva temple and worshipped by Hindu of India and nearby the temple of Ambaji is also a stop for pilgrims.

Was it a Love memorial Dedicated to Mumtaz Mahal?

This is a valid question and often ignored by the most historians and the commonly accepted representation has never been questioned. Since Mumtaz Mahal is dead, **the dead person**

speaks no tales. However, reviewing all histories and document sources and clear lack of statement by Shah Jahan himself that he is dedicating to or the building for Mumtaz Mahal, we have to assume that he built it for himself like all of his predecessor with an objective of making it a world class monument and for that he deserves our credits. Aurangzeb criticizes in his letter to his father for neglect of cenotaph where Mumtaz body was housed on a temporary basis. I myself would think that if he had that in mind, he probably would have named it as “Mumtaz Mahal” rather than Taj Mahal. The exact meaning of the word “Taj” is given here:

“ A high, conical cap worn in Muslim countries, brimless hat, usually conical or curved on top, worn by men and women in Muslim countries. The Taj (from the Persian and Arabic words for crown) developed out of the ancient tiaras (see tiara) worn in the Mesopotamian valley.”

Judging from the above, it appears that Shah Jahan meant that to be a “Crown of Mausoleum” than “Love Memorial”. This is the reason; none of the historian of Mogul’s time calls that as “Love Memorial”.

All the Mogul rulers from top to bottom had hundred of wives and concubines and Hindu rulers were no exception to this rule either. In this environment it is a hard conceive and absorb the concept of “true love” that demands a singular relationship and is dedicated to one person. All the Mogul rulers have shown that their love and affection was widely “distributed” and “shared”, so 100 percent dedication of “True love” could not exist and is absent in Muslim faith, considering that women are regarded as “property”.

Shah Jahan with his excessive addiction of alcohol and the opium in his last day became very sick. He may have demolished the old palace of Mansingh or built over some part of the truncated structure like using to first two floors to build the platform for the Taj monument. The exact details are lacking either in Aurangzeb’s letter or Pad Shah Nama. Since the time of Humayun, every mogul emperor has built a tomb memorial for himself and the members of his family. Akbar’s Sikandara is also a very note worthy monument but Taj Mahal tops it all.

Mumtaz Mahal is not here to answer the important question that how she felt about the life of the polygamy, so it is hard to imagine the perception of Love Memorial. The “true love” implies the 100 % dedication. Shah Jahan’s motive to build the grandest monuments for himself and to serve as his final resting place along with his favorite wife who took care of him in his last days of illness now can be understood in different light and we must look for previously constructed Mogul monuments as possible source of the inspiration for Taj Mahal

to come to a logical conclusion that Taj Mahal should be considered a great architect of India with pooled talents all over world representing Indo-Persian art that exceeded the beauty of the previously built Mogul monuments. This was built as a final “resting place for emperor and empress.

Misconception:

As we discussed earlier, the Moguls like their ancestors were nomadic people, good fighter and excellent horse riders and their material culture in arts, painting and architect was limited and borrowed from other civilization. The tomb of Timur Lane at Samarkand is all of Persian designs.

We know that Taj Mahal is a combination of Hindu and Persian architect with Mogul input for the garden. The Mogul garden concept of “Char Bag” was entirely their own concept and is well displayed in all their monuments. This anomaly in understanding persists among our teaching institutions and the tourist industries and the Government controlled ASI’s failure to bring out at the risk of not being “politically correct” and that distorts the history.

Let us first look at Jahangir whose Mausoleum stands in Lahore for some strange reason while everyone else lies in Delhi-Agra vicinity. Jahangir died at Rajauri in 1627 AD after he returned from Lahore. He was buried on the banks of the River Ravi in the large walled garden of Empress Noor Jahan three miles northwest of the region of Shah Dara near Delhi. His tomb was built and completed **by Emperor Shah Jahan in 1637 AD**, at the cost of ten Lakh Rupees. Now, why Shah Jahan decided to build his tomb in Lahore but next to his beloved father Akbar’s Sikandara remain a good question and only Noor Jahan can answer that. Noor Jahan built her father’s mausoleum at Agra often dubbed as (Mini-Taj Mahal). Rajauri is in Kashmir and by all account Jahangir loved Kashmir. One would think that would be his natural place for his burial and the second choice will be either Delhi or Agra where his predecessors were buried.



Jahangir's Tomb in Lahore same four frontal garden arrangement and blue tile design typical of Islamic Persian design while utilizing native red stones and marbles of Rajasthan



Jahangir's Tomb-marble, Asylum of Pardon, two wall frescoes in vestibule chambers, Entrance Gate-Lahore

Obviously, this is less fitting memorial or an inspiration for the Grand structure of Taj Mahal and Shah Jahan decided to build it at far away at Lahore so he can be spared the criticism why he spent more monies for himself rather than his father or he may have hated his father in his last days, so he can place him at farthest place possible, not where he died in beautiful Kashmir valley. We do not have the answer but it certainly raises the question.

The Great Akbar's Sikandara located at Agra does not offer any significant competition to Taj. This is a real combination of Rajput and Mogul architect combined. The construction is native in origin and simply modest.



Blue inlaid mogul architect inside Sikandara with Rajput Haveli type construction at the top on Sikandara



Akbar Sikandara with garden entrance to burial chamber, outside lattice panels and his cenotaph

This more or less confirms that Akbar’s secularity and his memories that included his upbringing and sheltering at Umerkot (Pakistan) in North then under Rai Maldev. When Humayun was attacked and in a total retreat from Lodi and Hemu Vikramditya’s forces, he fled Delhi and he was on a run. He barely survived the chase and headed to Umerkot. He

received unexpected help from Rai Maldev who raised Akbar during his infancy. Akbar never forgot this act of generosity by a Hindu king.

His meetings with Jain Acharya Hiravijayji Suri and Guru Gobind Singh and his worship of Sufism of Salim Chisti showed his vision towards universality and secularism. He practiced a milder and tolerant form of Islam and controlled the hard liner. His memorial therefore is simple in nature representing both Hindu and Muslim architect.

Itimad-Ud- Daula and Noor Jahan

One of the most unnoticed men in Mughal's history is the story of Itimad-Ud-Daula who was the officer of the Mughal emperor Jahangir. His tomb was erected by none other than the most famous lady in the history of Mughal dynasty – Noor Jahan. It stands as a testimony to her family's standing in the royal court and also serves as a turning point in the evolution of Mughal architecture that ends up at what is at displays at Taj Mahal.

This intriguing story starts with an Iranian nobleman Ghiyas Beg, who came to India on a fortune hunt. Ghiyas Beg's father was a prime minister of Khorasan but his fortune went south that forced him to flee towards India and ended up in Agra at the Mughal court in search of employment. His daughter "Mehrunissa" was born during this difficult and arduous journey near Kandahar during 1577 AD. Mehrunissa was not their biological offspring but someone in their fleeing caravan was happy to give her up for adoption. Unknown to him at that time, this young baby brings him the bountiful rewards when she grows up and becomes the famous Noor Jahan.

Kawaja Ghiyas Beg and then his son Asaf Khan rose very fast through the rank of Imperial hierarchy during Akbar's time due to their sheer hard work and loyalty. Ghiyas beg earned the title of Itimad-ud-daula (Pillar of the State) and promoted to the post of Minister by Jahangir. Mehrunissa was married to a middle rank Iranian noble man with the blessing of Akbar himself. Ghiyas Beg came from a highly educated Iranian family but the real turn in family's fortune came through this daughter when she became the Empress of Jahangir when the noble man fell out of the favor of the Mogul or he was purposely eliminated by Jahangir. Jahangir married Noor Jahan (Mehrunissa), when she was 35 years old and she became 20th of his wives. With the passage of time, she acquired the position of number one of his wife, and the family's influence increased through Noor Jahan. Noor Jahan's daughter from her first marriage Ladli Begum was married to Jahangir's son Shahriyar. Asaf Khan's daughter Arjumand Bano Begum (future Mumtaz Mahal) was married to the most powerful of

Jahangir's sons, Prince Khurram or Emperor Shah Jahan. It has been alleged that Noor Jahan and her allies- father Itimad-ud-daula and brother Asaf Khan devised the master plan to capture the emperorship after Jahangir's death. As Jahangir went on increasing his daily intake of the opium the empire was run by troika consisting of Noor Jahan, her father who was the minister and brother who was the commander of Mogul army. It is believed the troika had built a powerful economic empire with her trade deals with Portuguese and English traders. The mogul treasuries were getting richer by the day.

The glaring example of her power came to historian's attention when she was able to strike her own coin alongside Jahangir , a rare instance in the Mughal history, perhaps the only one, suggesting that as Jahangir was withering away and no longer coherent, Noor Jahan and her family were running the empire under his name.



Image of silver coin- Noor Jahan's name is inscribed on right side (Farsi-Persian)

Noor Jahan started building the tomb of her father in 1622 AD at the height of her power and it was completed in 1628 AD, shortly after Jahangir's death and Noor Jahan's fall from power. It represents a great transition in Mughal architecture from its first to second phase. From pre-Akbar days, Mughal buildings - both public and military buildings (like mosque or fort) and funerary buildings (more personal) were built in red sandstone. From the days of Humayun tomb (built by Humayun's sister Gulbadan Begum), Mughal artisans specialized in marble inlay within sandstone panel. But it was at Itimad-ud-daula, we see for the first time a complete mausoleum made of marble with Persian art. Itimad-ud-daula is also significant monument that represents the new architectural blend of Indo-Persian, seen for the first

time in Mughal buildings – pietra dura or large scale stone inlay using precious and semi-precious stones and chiaroscuro or the use of light and shadow technique.

Architecturally, the Itimad-ud-daula tomb is a “Mini Taj Mahal” and houses other member of his family like his wife Asmat Begum and Noor Jahan’s daughter Ladli Begum and is also located on the bank of the river with rectangular plot. This complex has four huge gates, built of red sand stone but decorated with marble inlays much like Humayun’ tomb or Akbar’s Sikandara. Just like every mogul mausoleum, there are four lush green Mughal garden and four minarets on each corner of the structure. In order not to upset the apple cart with any other noble, Noor Jahan kept this memorial small but the base of the monument remains in the bed of the sand stones.

Opium Addiction and effect on the Brain of Moguls:

According to national Institute of Health the excessive use of opium can affect the brain and the entire functioning of the body. The “Opioids” extract act by attaching to specific proteins called “Opioids receptors”, which are found in the brain, spinal cord, gastrointestinal tract, and other organs in the body. When these drugs attach to their receptors, they reduce the perception of pain. Opioids can also produce drowsiness, mental confusion, nausea, constipation, and, depending upon the dosage. It can also depress respiration and the ability to breath. Since India for centuries controlled Afghanistan, the opium was available in abundance and was widely used in India primarily for relaxation and enjoyment as well as to reduce the pain like the use of the alcohol. This is the one simple example I can give that why wine industries arrived late in the history.

The dried latex is obtained from the opium poppy for further use (*Papaver somniferum*). Opium contains approximately 12% morphine, an alkaloid, which is frequently processed chemically to produce heroin for the illegal drug trade and for legal medicinal use in some countries. The latex also includes the alkaloid codeine and its similarly structured cousin used in many medicines as the pain remover or reducer. It also contains non-analgesic alkaloids such as papaverine and noscapine.

Excessive use of opium can lead to the death. NIH described this in their medical studies:

1. Opiates can depress breathing by changing neurochemical activity in the brain stem, where automatic body functions are controlled.

2. Opiates can change the limbic system, which controls emotions, to increase feelings of pleasure.

3. Opiates can block pain messages transmitted through the spinal cord from the body.

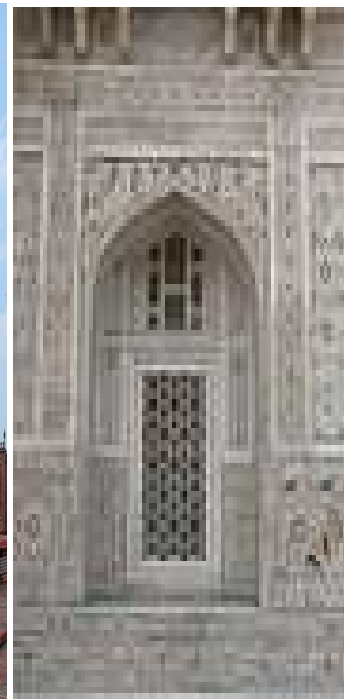
It is doubtful and questionable if either Shah Jahan or Jahangir had functioning mental abilities to make the decisions themselves as most of them were made for them. Aurangzeb's letter is an indictment in itself where he seems to suggest if not chastizing the Emperor Shah Jahan directly "on the neglect of the tomb of his mother Mumtaz Mahal in a degrading structure".



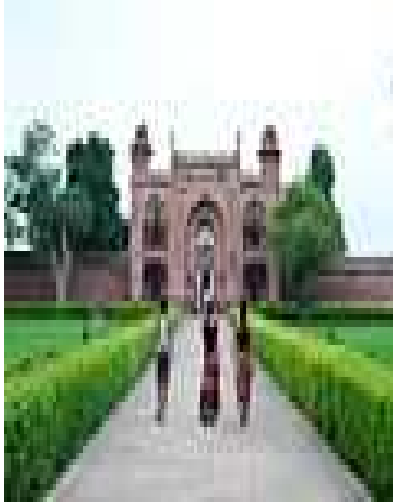
Mausoleum of Itimad-ud-Daula



Corner View of the Mausoleum



Details on the wall



Entrance gate with mogul garden



Cupola with Minaret (half moon)



Details of tile inlay

Some experts have stipulated that some of the designs of the Taj were copied from a similar structure built around the same time by Ottoman Turk in Istanbul called sultan Ahmed Mosque. That seems very unlikely as can be seen from the comparison below that the architectural styles are totally different. The comparison chart below should clarify the misconception. However, the ideas travel faster than anyone can imagine.



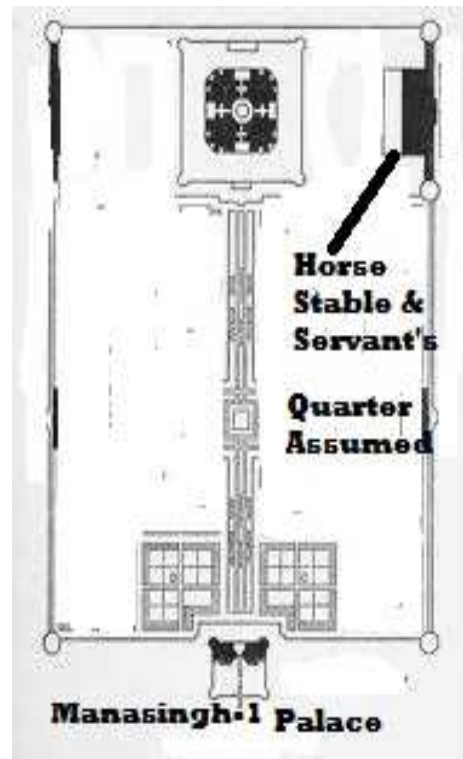
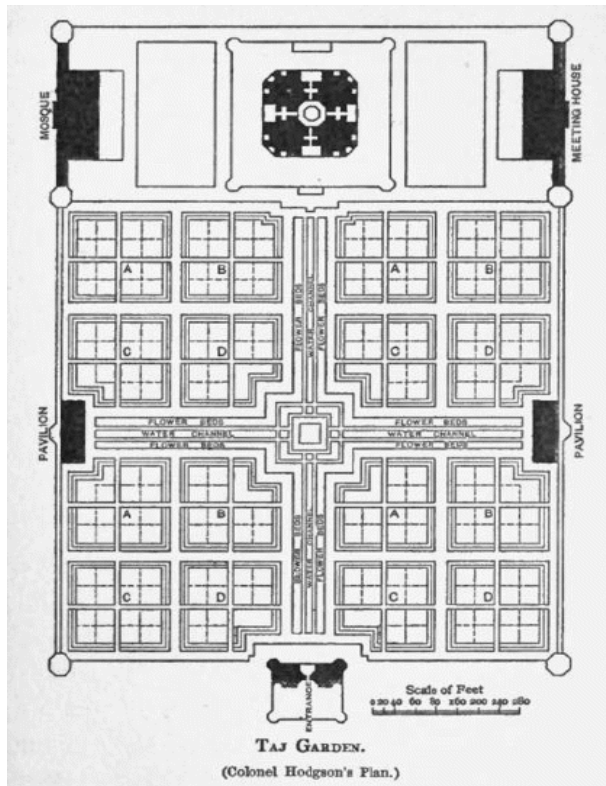
Taj Mahal



Sultan Ahmed Mosque-Turkey

Architects	<u>Ustad Ahmad Lahouri</u> <u>Ustad Isa</u>	<u>Seeker Hemmed Magha</u>
architectural style	Indo-Persian architecture	Ottoman architecture Islamic architecture
Function	Monument Mausoleum	Mosque Monument
Height	561'	141'
Opened	1648	1616

Taj Mahal's Construction:



Seven storied structure-exact position within complex unknown

Based on Amber Fort of Jaipur, a relative assumption can be made of marble-red sandstone structure of Raja Manasingh-1, built during Akbar's time. A total demolition and rebuild has to be done to accommodate the construction of Taj Mahal except to use old existing fortification of Yamuna river bed with additional reinforcement. Certain levels (assumed) two levels of old structure may have been used to fortify the base and Top structure of old place may have been used as a giant plat form. This is the assumption model and other variation of Palace structure is also possible. Amber fort is located overlooking the lake so it is highly likely that Raja Mansingh prefer the water view and Akbar could have easily granted to his old pal without any question. It is highly doubtful as to what active role Shah Jahan would have played due to his addiction to opium but if he was actively involved; he played a decreasing role once Mumtaz and then Aurangzeb assumed the power. Aurangzeb had imprisoned Shah Jahan into the Agra Fort where he lived for the balance of his life as an invalid and addict. Aurangzeb would have liked very much to do this more for his love of mother than his love for his father as he himself was not his pick of succession. The design

take off are from all the mogul monuments and more is derived from marble monument of his grandfather “Itimad-ud-daula”. Shah Jahan presented Maharajah Jai Singh with a larger palace in the center of Agra in exchange for the old seven storied palace built by Manasingh-1st. The letters in Jaipur archive confirms this fact.

The structure of Taj Mahal’s size, an area of roughly three acres was appropriated including the area owned by King of Amber-Jaipur. The land was excavated, filled with dirt to reduce seepage and leveled at 50 meters above riverbank.

In the tomb area, wells were dug and filled with stone and rubble as the footings of the tomb. Instead of lashed bamboo, workmen constructed a colossal brick scaffold that mirrored the tomb. The scaffold was so enormous that foremen estimated it would take years to dismantle.

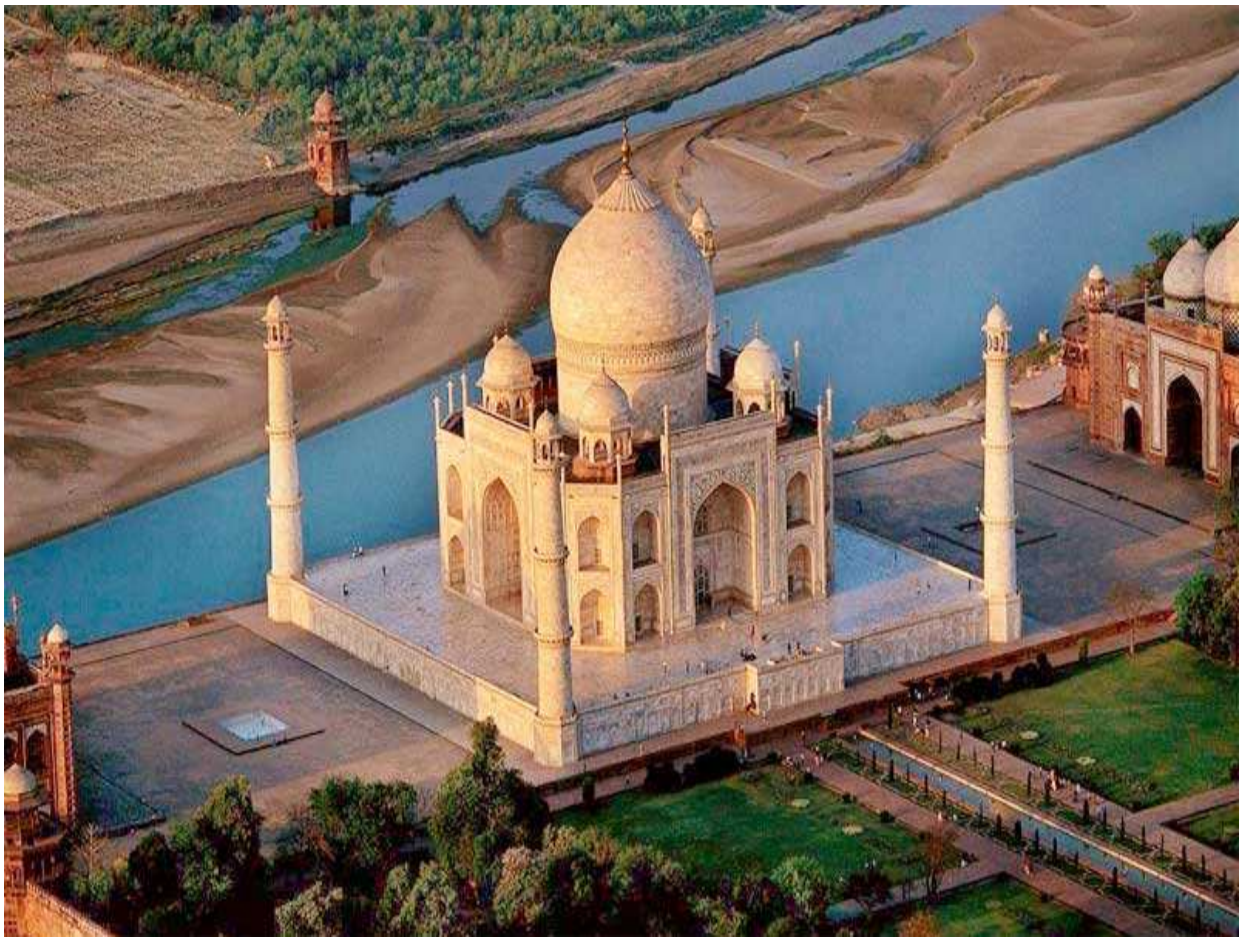
According to the folklore, Shah Jahan had allowed anyone to keep the bricks taken from the scaffold, and thus it was dismantled by peasants in few days. A fifteen kilometer tamped-earth ramp was built to transport Rajasthan marble and materials to the construction site.

The trains of elephants, camels and Oxen carts were used to transport the materials from the quarries to the site in Agra. Similar teams of animal driven methods were used to pull blocks on specially constructed wagons. An elaborate post-and-beam pulley system was used to raise the blocks into desired position. The Water was drawn from the river by a series of buckets mechanism, into a various storage tanks. See Bucket wheels of Yamuna River.



The plinth and tomb took roughly 12 years to complete. The remaining parts of the complex took an additional 10 years for a total of 22 years and included minarets, mosque and Mausoleum and gateway with gardens. The entire Taj complex was built in stages.

The Estimates of the cost of the construction of Taj Mahal is very difficult to estimate as the construction costs were spread over 22 years time. On a “Replacement cost basis” of construction can now be estimated to run over trillions of Dollars in today’s market that can wipe out India’s cumulative budget deficits. This may be the ideal project for privatization like Disney theme park.



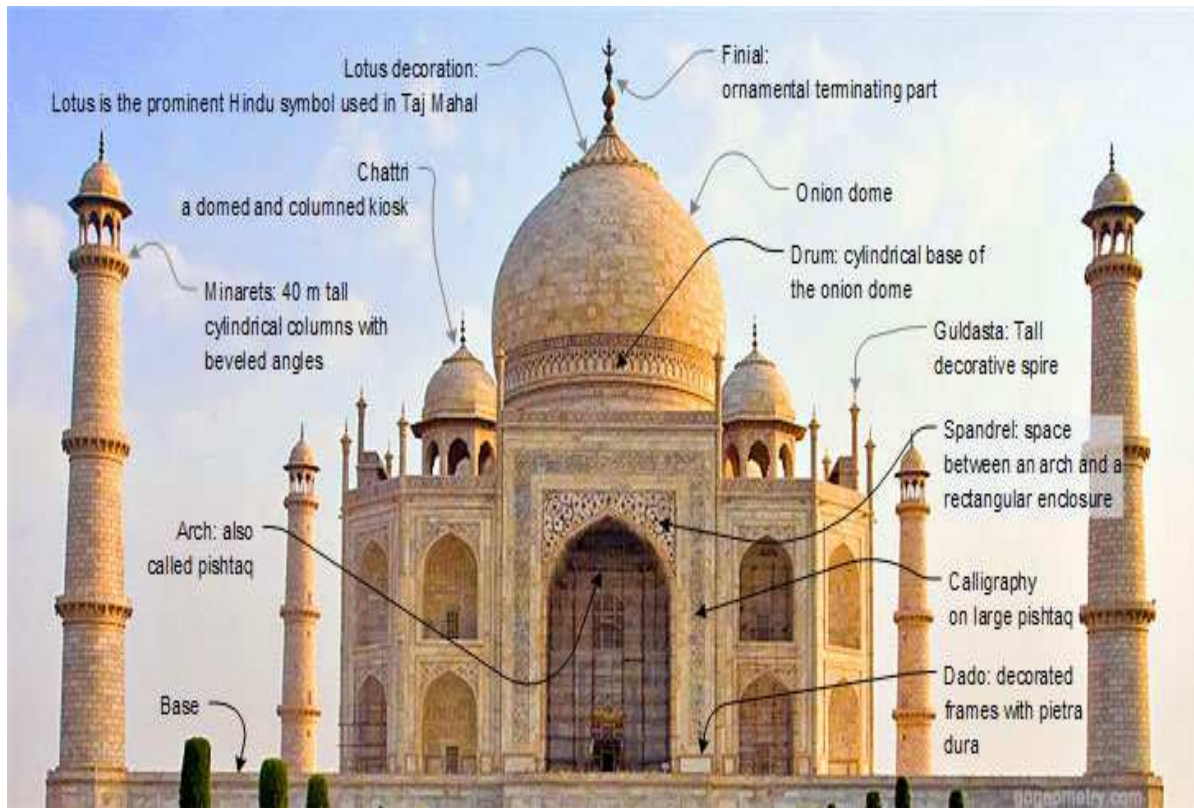
Aerial View of Taj over Yamuna River at Agra near Mathura, a birth place of Krishna



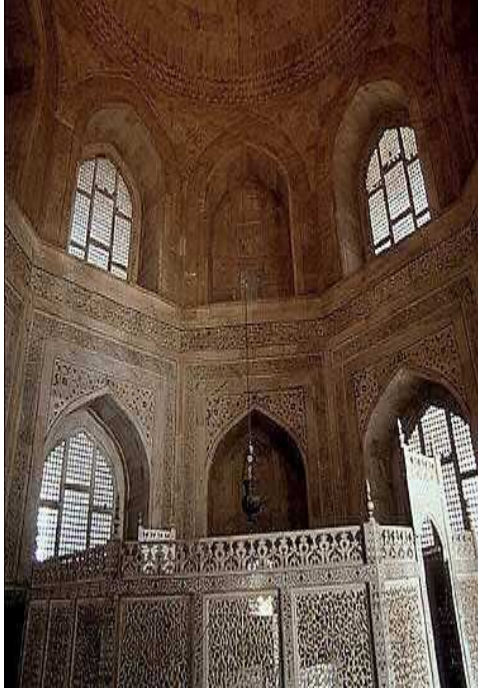
Animals and Wagons at Work during Construction



A magnificent Monument of Taj at Agra- a world's UNESCO heritage site



Outside stone inlaid and decoration with semi precious stones of all kinds



Inside Octagonal chamber and viewing balcony engraved with design and color



Dome architecture



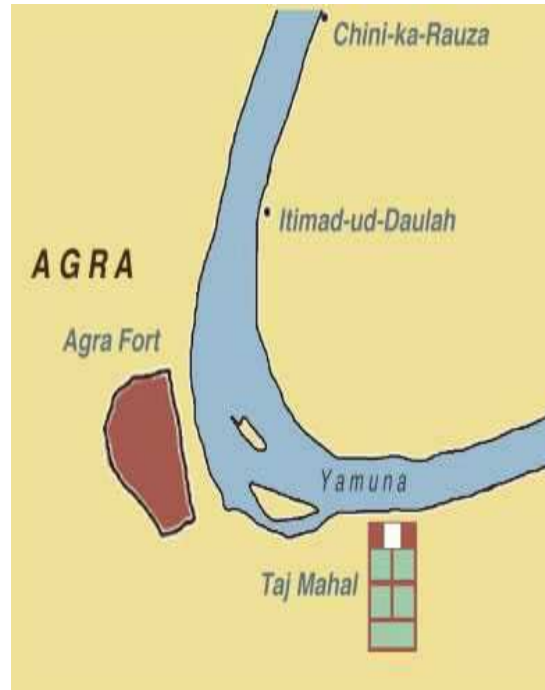
Craft men at work



Inlaid marble work of faked cenotaph at the upper level

The Labor forces of about twenty thousand workers were recruited from across the Northern India. The specialized Sculptors from Bukhara, calligraphers from Syria and Persia, inlayers from southern India, stone cutters from Northwest India, and a specialist in building turrets, another who carved only marble flowers were part of the thirty-seven men who formed the creative design unit of Taj. Some of the builders involved in construction of Taj Mahal under the master supervision of court appointed Ustad Ahmad Lahouri (From Lahore) were:

1. Ismail Afandi or Ismail Khan of the Ottoman Empire who designed the main dome.
2. Ustad Isa and Isa Muhammad Effendi of Persia Credited with a key role in the structural integrity while providing architectural design.
3. Hindu designer 'Puru' from Banaras, India was a Supervising Architect.
4. Qazim Khan, a native of Lahore, who supervised the casting of metal and gold.
5. Chiranjilal, a Hindu lapidary polisher from Delhi and chief sculptor.
6. The Chief calligrapher and Mosaics expert- Amanat Khan from Shiraz, Iran.
7. Muhammad Hanif, a supervisor of masons (Converted Hindu-India)
8. Mir Abdul Karim with Mukkarimat Khan of Shiraz, Persia handled finances and management of daily production- court appointed.



Taj Mahal as it stands today is one of the most outstanding examples of Indian architecture, which combines blended Indian, Persian and Islamic influences. At its center is the Taj Mahal itself, built of shimmering white marble that seems to reflect the color of light depending on the sunlight or moonlight hitting its surface. It was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983 AD.

The construction involved the import of Italian marble that was used for calligraphy and Kuranic verses. The Indian White marble was inlaid with semi-precious stones (including jade, crystal, lapis lazuli, amethyst and turquoise all available from Rajasthan sources forming the intricate designs in a technique known as “pietra dura.”

Its central dome reaches a height of 240 feet and is surrounded by four smaller domes; four slender minarets. As per Islamic tradition, the verses from the Quran are inscribed in the calligraphy on the arched entrances to the mausoleum, in addition to numerous other sections of the complex. Inside the mausoleum, an octagonal marble chamber adorned with carvings and semi-precious stones housed the cenotaph that is a “false tomb of Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan”. The real sarcophagus containing their remains lay below at the garden level.

The Taj Complex includes a main gateway constructed of carved Rajasthani Red sandstone and a square garden divided into four quarters Called (Char bag) separated by long pools of water, as well as a red sandstone adjoining mosque and an identical building called a “Jawab” (“mirror”) directly across from the mosque to provide a symmetry. Keeping geometrical pattern in structure erection was the tradition of Mughal building architecture. In one of this side structure, there was probably a Hindu temple.

As per the folklores, Shah Jahan intended to build a second grand mausoleum across the Yamuna River from the white marbled Taj Mahal called Black Taj using Black marble. The archeological examination performed by various experts found no basis for that work. Severally addicted emperor would not have been able to implement that. Another folklore that he had the hands cut off of the entire talented stone carvers and designers had no basis and it remains the figment of someone’s imagination.

In fact, Aurangzeb deposed his ailing and opium addicted depressed father in 1658 AD and took power himself. Shah Jahan lived out the last years of his life under house arrest in a secluded part of the Agra fort with a view of the majestic resting place he had constructed for himself and his wife. He died in 1666 AD and was buried next to her, the mother of Aurungzeb.

Aurangzeb’s Love Affair with Hindu Lady:

Aurangzeb is remembered for his harsh rule and treatment of Hindu but his personal story of love affair with a Hindu lady offers a real contradiction. For whatever it is worth, it should be noted that at early period of his life and probably this was the only romance of his life was his passion for Hira Bai, (renamed Zainabadi), whom he procured from the harem of his maternal uncle. It was a case of love at first sight and Aurangzeb’s infatuation for the beautiful singer knew no bound: to please her he consented to drink wine! Their union was cut short by her death in the bloom of youth, which plunged her lover in the deepest grief. However, he did not think of building another Taj Mahal for his love.

This should make us wonder why Taj Mahal is not more championed as a great architectural wonder of secular India where Hindu, Muslims and experts from other side of the world made a significant accomplishment rather than labeling that mausoleum as the “Love Memorial” that it was not.

Shah Jahan had a plan to build that for himself and he decided to include his 20th wife who helped him through his last leg of life and she happened to be the mother of powerful successor Aurangzeb. The promotion as a “Love Memorial” is tourist “Gachha” that India cannot ignore since its colonial times and it serves as a visiting point for all foreign dignitaries and head of states.

Unfortunately, Aurangzeb who was more ambitious than his father could have done more for the tourists but did not give much thought. He was too busy destroying Hindu culture and adopting the destructive instincts of the Taliban.

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