

**THE TAJ MAHAL  
ANALYSIS  
OF  
A GREAT DECEPTION**

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Publisher  
Dr Vijay Bedekar  
Itihas Patrika Prakashan  
Dr Bedekar hospital  
Shivashakti  
Maharshi karve Marg  
Thane 400,602  
Hindusthan (India)

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Second Edition – March 2007  
First Edition -- April 1986

Printer  
Vaibhav Barve  
Vedavidya Mudranalaya  
Jogeshwari Lane  
Pune 411002  
Hindusthan (India)

Price Rs 30/-

ISBN No.

## **Preface**

Twenty years have passed since the first edition of this book was published in 1986. The manuscript of the book was ready in 1980, but the publication was held up for lack of funds. In the same year, two letters challenging the prevalent Taj Legend were published in the Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects. One by Prof P. N. Oak and the other one by me. No one has yet invalidated our arguments.

In 1981, I visited the Taj Mahal along with three friends. After spending two days, we realised that we had not finished our tour. It was then that we knew how much there was to see. I also visited various alleged Islamic monuments in Delhi and gained a new perspective.

Between 1981 and 1996 I compiled all the pieces of evidence on the Taj Mahal from 1784 to 1984 and was surprised to note that they all led to the same conclusion: that it was not built by Shahjahan but was an ancient Hindu structure. Moreover, they revealed that the British scholars and archaeologists knew the truth about the Taj Mahal all along, but had suppressed the truth for political reasons. In April 1996, my findings were published in a book entitled: *Taj Mahal and the Great British Conspiracy*.

On 6 February 1983, John Keay presented Part 5 of his series "India - a cacophony of cultures" on BBC Radio 3. He started and finished the program by referring to my letter to him. He interviewed our opponents, but not Mr Oak or me. He implicitly equated our research work to the burning of books by the Nazis. This just shows how, even today, prejudices run deep in the field of historical research.

Truth is many times inconvenient, unpalatable, unpleasant and uncomfortable, not only for the foreign rulers and dictators, but also for ministers of democratically elected governments. They therefore twist or suppress it and present history to suit their ideology. Even in a democracy, many official files are kept secret for 30 to 100 years. Official Secrets Acts often unreasonably ensure secrecy, the intention being that when the files are open to public, it would be too late to have any impact. Sometimes there are unwritten 'gentlemen's agreements' ensuring the suppression of truth. The American Press, for example, did not publish the love affairs of J F Kennedy when he was

the U S President in the 1960s. In Britain, there used to be a 'D' notice convention. Editors of British newspapers would be told the truth with the understanding that they would not print the story.

But eventually truth emerges. The same has happened in the case of the Taj Mahal. The British rulers in India had a deep interest in the falsification of Indian History. After the British left, the Congress Party was guided by Gandhi and Nehru to almost invariably capitulate to the demands of Indian Muslims. This practise persists today.

During the last 25 years I have presented many slide shows on the Taj Mahal and answered our critics. I have dealt with British historians and scholars and hence know their attitudes very well. I have also been producing newsletters almost every four months outlining how Indian history has been twisted and falsified.

In light of all the above developments, I am proud to present to the readers this revised edition of my 1986 book: *Taj Mahal : Analysis of a Great Deception*.

Just like Prof P. N. Oak, the late Prof Bhatnagar too started having his doubts about so-called Islamic monuments in India, when in 1961 he visited the Kutb Minar, as the tower is commonly known. It kindled his interest in Indian history and geography. In 1975, He started to put forward his research findings under the heading '*Stones speak*'. His friends advised him to keep quiet, but he refused. Unfortunately, after publishing three booklets, he died.

He wrote: "History deals with facts, which do not cease to exist merely because a section of die-hards is out to deny them. Those who feel uncomfortable with facts going against their settled views may shut their eyes, if they like, to the light of truth revealed by research. People who decline to digest the outcome of research are responsible for groping in the dark and for perpetuating falsehood. If facts, having remained unnoticed for a long time, come to light, scholars welcome them, study them, weigh them and prepare themselves to accept them only if they find them correct. Study of History ought to be unbiased and a student should, therefore, shake off his/her prejudices. One is free to pass one's judgement but only after giving a patient hearing. "

## Prejudiced judges

We have seen how prejudiced are reporters, like John Keay, who work for the BBC. One must not think for a moment that it is just persons like him who are prejudiced. Even the learned Judges are not immune from it. Mr G. D. Khosla, former Chief Justice of Punjab High Court, wrote in 1963:

"I have made it a rule never to make a deep study of any case before the actual hearing begins. I usually read the judgment appealed against to acquaint myself of the salient facts and get an overall impression of the matter I have to deal with. I have always been of the view that too close a pre-study of the evidence and a mastery of the details involved hinder a fair and impartial hearing, because, away from the open atmosphere of the court and without the points of view of the two parties before it, the mind is apt to interpret the whole case in the light of its personal prepossessions. This builds up an unconscious resistance against the arguments of counsel, for though judges are perpetually advertising the remarkable fluidity of truly judicial minds and their capacity for remaining open, till the last word in a cause has been uttered, eminent judges are notoriously obstinate and difficult to dislodge from their beliefs and convictions. I have known judges who come to court even more fully prepared than the lawyers engaged by the parties. I have a suspicion that they do this partly from a sense of their high duty, but also because of their desire to make an exhibition of their industry and erudition. No matter how learned and experienced the judge, if he has made a deep study of a case he will inevitably have formed an opinion regarding its merits before he comes to court. So, he will start with a bias and it will be difficult to displace him from his position, for his subconscious mind will refuse to admit that something important escaped his close study of the case or that a certain piece of evidence was erroneously interpreted. A truly liquid mind is a very rare commodity among high judicial dignitaries."

Ref – *The murder of the Mahatma and other cases from a Judge's Notebook*, by G D Khosla,  
Chatto and Windus, London 1963. pp 214/215

One should remember that there were demands in India that the above book by Khosla should be banned because he told the truth about Nathuram Godse's performance in the High Court!! Nathuram shot and killed Gandhi on 31 January 1948. That is how deep prejudices run.

I therefore urge the reader to set aside whatever she/he has come to understand about the Taj Mahal and start reading my book without any preconceptions.

Keeping an open mind can make a tremendous impact. Mr Oak publicly expressed his serious doubts about the existing Taj legend and proposed in 1965 that *Taj Mahal was a Rajput Palace*. In the year 1967, he came across a strong opponent who was a Kashmiri Pandit and an expert in Persian language, employed by Government of India. He used to argue that there was documentary evidence to prove that Shahjahan did build the Taj Mahal. Mr Oak challenged him to prove it. They went together to the Government of India Archives in New Delhi. The Director told them, "The only document that exists is Badshahnama."

The Persian expert started reading pages 402/403. He came across line 29 on page 403 which reads,

" Wa Pesh az ein Manzil-e-Rajah Mansingh bood wadari waqt ba Raja Jaisingh " This was a clear cut confession that Shahjahan grabbed Raja Mansingh's Palace for burial of his wife Mumtaz. Within two minutes the Persian expert confessed that he was wrong. Unfortunately he wished to remain anonymous. He gave Mr Oak, word by word translation (from Persian into English) of Volume I pages 402/403. Mr Oak promptly included it in his book in 1968. We all should be ever so grateful for the honesty of that Kashmiri Pandit.

I hope, therefore, that you will read my book with an open mind. After reading this book and visiting the Taj Mahal (if possible) you will realise how people are still being duped by the false propaganda that Shahjahan built it as a monument of his love for his wife Mumtaz. I appreciate that it is not easy to clear from one's mind the Taj legend which has been prevalent for 150 to 200 years, but please be patient. Read the book a couple of times to grasp the details.

The style of my presentation is different from that normally adopted for historical research. It is a dialogue between two persons. One is asking questions (in Italics) and the other is replying (in ordinary font). I hope you will find it easy to follow.

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19 March 2007  
(Gudhi Padwa)

### **Preface to first edition**

My involvement in the construction of jackets for the North Sea oilfields (in Scotland) made me aware that I have the ability to analyse even the most unfamiliar and complex tasks. By sheer chance I purchased Prof. P.N. Oak's book "Taj Mahal is a Hindu Temple Palace", from the bookshop of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, London. As I read it, my curiosity arose and my comments on the book ran into 44 pages. I decided to seek answers to my questions myself and find out if Prof. Oak's conclusion was logical. One by one I went through all the references but always refused to be drawn in any arguments prematurely. I even obtained a copy of the *Badshahnama* from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, and asked two friends to translate pages 402/403 (of Vol I) for me. Finally, when I read Stella Kramrisch's book *The Hindu Temple*, in October 1979, I was convinced that Prof. Oak was 101 per cent right: Taj Mahal is a Hindu Temple Palace and not a mausoleum.

My next task was the presentation of facts in a systematic and cohesive manner as gathered from various sources. After a great deal of thought, the question and answer form was chosen so that any reasonable person would follow the line of questioning and understand the issues. A 14-page paper finally emerged in April 1980 and was appreciated by many, including some Professors of Architecture in the U.K.

As time passed by, I tried to answer many questions commonly asked and went through more references: e.g. East India Company Records, Travels of J.A. Mandelslo, etc. They all confirmed my conclusion. Later on, I went through other references quoted by our opponents (traditionalists). To my surprise, those contained valuable information, which our opponents have persistently ignored. For instance, many authors have referred to Latif's book of 1896 but not one of them has quoted the vital sentence from it..." the site chosen for the mausoleum was late Raja Mansingh's Palace... "

Some refer to the 1871-72 Report of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) but do not explain why the plans and sections of Taj Mahal obtained by General Cunningham were never made public.

Nobody states that the ASI officials have been responsible for the Taj Mahal for more than a century but have never done an archaeological survey of the Taj Mahal.



Theirs is not a scholarly attitude. Historians must not behave like paid agents and write histories as if they were party political broadcasts on behalf of the Mughals or anyone else.

During my discussions with some of our opponents, who believe in the current Taj Legend, I was stunned by the arguments which they put forward. One civil engineer working for Pune (Poona) Municipal Corporation wrote: "It is a common misconception that buildings like the Taj Mahal need fairly deep foundations. They only need to be a bit wider but that is all. Foundation of the famous St Paul's Cathedral in London is only 4 ft deep." An Indian architect, who is a member of the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) and lives in Kent said, "Why do you need any foundation for a structure like Taj Mahal at all? You start building and it just comes up. St Paul's Cathedral, London, has no foundation at all! " To what depths would our opponents sink?

Such mental shortcomings are the result of learning our own falsified history for far too long. What applies to the Taj Mahal and the history of Indian architecture also applies to social, political, economic, educational and all other fields of our life. We have lost our ability to think clearly, analyse the facts, and find out solutions to our problems ourselves. Instead we look to the Americans, the Russians, the Chinese and anyone else (except ourselves) for guidance. I sincerely hope that reading my book will go a long way towards regaining this ability, which is vital for our cultural survival and prosperity.

My research is my own. I have not been guided by any one. It is simply the result of incessant quest for truth. Some readers may find it necessary to read it a few times before they grasp the basic facts. I only request that they be patient. I would gladly answer any genuine questions and welcome constructive criticism. More evidence has come to light, which I have not been able to incorporate in this edition, but would do so in the next edition.

Finally, I am extremely grateful to Mrs. Mohini Chidgupkar for her typing. The public library system in the U.K. is most commendable. The staff of the Hammersmith Public Library, London, were especially helpful.

I also thank Dr. V.V. Bedekar, Director, Institute for Oriental Study,  
Thane (INDIA) for undertaking the publication of this book.

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April 1986

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### **Basis of the Taj Legend**

The Taj Mahal was built between 1631 and 1653 by Emperor Shah Jahan (1627-1658) as the tomb for his wife Arjumand better known as Mumtaz Mahal, "Ornament of the Palace." 20,000 men worked on it incessantly for 22 years.

Born in 1592, Arjumand was the daughter of Asaf Khan, she married Shah Jahan in 1612 and died in Burhanpur in 1631 after the birth of her fourteenth child. After his death the Emperor was buried by her side.

This Taj legend has arisen mainly out of 17<sup>th</sup> century contemporary travellers' accounts. Let us therefore examine them in detail. Let us ask some straightforward questions and seek the truth.

### **TAVERNIER**

*For the last 170 years we have been told that 20,000 men worked for 22 years on the construction of the Taj Mahal. Where do these figures come from?*

They come from the book *Travels in India* by J B Tavernier, a French jewel merchant, who made five voyages to India in the 17th century (between 1638 to 1668). The book was first published in French in 1675. Between 1677 and 1811 there have been nine editions of English translation of the same (there were 22 editions of the French book during the same period). Afterwards, in 1889 the 10th English edition, translated from original French and edited by Dr V Ball was published by Macmillan & Co, London. Dr Ball gives us the details of all the five voyages to India of Tavernier.

Tavernier says, "**Of all the tombs which one sees at Agra, that of the wife of SHAH JAHAN is the most splendid.** .....The tomb of this *Begum*, or sultan queen, is at the east end of the town by side of the river in a great square surrounded by walls, upon which there is a small gallery, as on the walls of many towns in EUROPE .....You enter into this square by a large gate and at first you see, on the left hand a beautiful gallery, which faces in the direction of MECCA; where there are three or four niches, where the Moufti comes at fixed times to pray..... There is a dome above, which is scarcely less magnificent than that of VAL DE GRACE AT PARIS. It is covered within and without with white marble, the middle being of brick. Under this dome there is

an empty tomb, for the *Begum* is interred under a vault which is beneath the first platform. .... **I witnessed the commencement and accomplishment of this great work, on which they expended 22 years, during which 20,000 men worked incessantly**; this is sufficient to enable one to realise that the cost of it has been enormous. .... SHAH JAHAN began to build his own tomb on the other side of the river; but the war which he had with his sons, interrupted his plan, and AURANGZEB, who reigns at present is not disposed to complete it "

[Ref – *Travels in India* by J B Tavernier, 1889  
Book I, chapter VIII, pp 109/111]

*Does he say when the construction had started and when it was finished?*

NO.

*So, when did he first come to Agra?*

Dr Ball tells us that Tavernier first came to Agra in the winter of 1640-41.

*That means that the construction of Taj Mahal started in the winter of 1640-41. Do the historians accept this date?*

No. They say it started 9 years earlier, i.e. immediately after the death of the lady.

*But then they should say that Tavernier DID NOT see the commencement of the building of Taj. Do they say that?*

No. All the historians, with the exception of H G Keene, are silent on this point. In 1909 Keene had the honesty to say, "Tavernier commenced his first voyage at the end of 1631 and after travelling from Constantinople to Isphan in Persia, returned to France in 1633. **He did not therefore see the commencement of the Taj**, but may have heard of it at Isphan." (*Handbook for visitors to Agra* by H G Keene. 7th edition rewritten and brought up to date by E A Duncan 1909, p154)

*O.K. So, Tavernier did not see the commencement of the Taj. But, did he see the completion?*

No.

*Why?*

Dr Ball tells us that Tavernier was in Agra for the second time in November 1665. Shajahan was dethroned and imprisoned in Agra Red Fort by his son Aurangzeb since June 1658. Shahjahan died in captivity in 1666.

*Do the historians say that the Taj was completed in 1665 or that Aurangzeb completed it?*

No. They insist that it was Shahjahan who completed the Taj by 1653.

*But, then by their own reckoning Tavernier could not have seen the completion of Taj because he did not arrive in Agra till 12 years later.*

Precisely.

*So, how do they reconcile the facts?*

They twist them. After 1889, everyone knew the dates and details of Tavernier's voyages to India. Therefore there is no excuse. Let us take some examples -

\* It is very strange that Dr Ball having provided extensive footnotes and having given details of all voyages of Tavernier, should keep quiet about Tavernier's visits to Agra and that he could not have seen the commencement and completion of Taj Mahal.

\* In 1893 Vincent Smith says, "... The lady died on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1631 at Burhanpur in the Deccan. ...This testimony of an eyewitness (Ball's Tavernier, Volume I p110) appears to be conclusive as to the time occupied in the building....."

"Tavernier's evidence is clear and positive. ... Tavernier visited Agra several times. (Ball, Volume I pp 142 & 149) and he was in India in A D 1653, twenty-two years after the death of the Empress. He quitted India in January 1654. He may well have been at Agra in that year."

(Sleeman's *Rambles and recollections of an Indian official*, edited by Vincent Smith, 1893, Volume I pp 380 to 384)

[Smith is deliberately playing mischief between Tavernier's visits to India and his visits to Agra]

\* In 1904, E B Havell, Principal of Government School of Arts, Calcutta, says, " Master-builders came from many different parts, ..... twenty thousand men were employed in the construction, which took seventeen years to complete." In a footnote he says, "Tavernier says twenty-two years probably including all the necessary buildings. " (*Agra and Taj*, page 74)

\* Again, in 1911, in his book *History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, Vincent Smith writes, " ... We know however from Tavernier who witnessed both the commencement and completion of the buildings that operations did not cease finally until 1653 nearly 22 years after they had begun. " (pp 412/413)

\* In 1915, Vincent Smith produced 2<sup>nd</sup> edited version of Sleeman's *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*. He still says on page 316, " ... The testimony of Tavernier is doubtless correct if understood as referring to the whole complex of buildings connected with the mausoleum. He visited Agra several times. He left India in January 1654, returning to the country in 1659. Work on the Taj began in 1632 and so appears to have been completed about the close of 1653."

#### **Tavernier came to Agra in 1640/41 and in 1665, but....**

\* In 1969, MARG magazine of Bombay issued a special issue in June on Taj Mahal, entitled *Taj Mahal, a dream in Marble*. Though the usual legend is repeated, Prof Ram Nath gives some interesting information on page 52. He says, " He (Tavernier) was in India on his second voyage to the East in 1640-41, when the Taj was under construction and a replica on the other side of the river could not have been begun, He was again at Agra in August-September 1665. "

\* In 1971, Bamber Gascoigne, who wrote *The Great Moghuls* does give some correct information about Tavernier. Under Bibliography he says on p255, "Tavernier was a French jewel merchant who made no fewer

than five separate journeys from Europe into India between 1638 and 1668. His destination was usually the Deccan, famous for the diamond mines at Golconda. But he was at Agra in 1640 when Shah Jahan was there, and he sold many jewels to Aurangzeb in Delhi in 1665. "

If Gascoigne had done some thinking he would have realised that, from the above details, Tavernier could not have seen the commencement or completion of Taj Mahal. But he does not do that, because he wants to maintain the legend. He says on

page 184, "by 1643 the structure was sufficiently complete for the annual memorial service for Mumtaz Mahal to be held there for the first time; and by 1648 the Taj itself was quite finished, though work continued on the subsidiary buildings until 1653.

(Vincent Smith, *History of Fine Arts in India* 1912 pp 160-61, June 1969 issue of MARG p 52 )..... "

And how does Vincent Smith come to reckon the year of completion to be 1653? On the basis of Tavernier's excellent testimony!! So, we just go round and round in circles.

*What happened after 1971? Do writers take note of when Tavernier visited Agra?*

No. They merely refer to Bamber Gascoigne but hide from readers, when Tavernier visited Agra and. Here are a few examples -

\* In 1972, 7<sup>th</sup> reprint of *The Taj Mahal* by David Carroll was published by NEWSWEEK of New York. In the selected bibliography he refers to Bamber Gascoigne.

\* In 1981, John Keay published his otherwise excellent book – *India Discovered*. In condensed bibliography we find Bamber Gascoigne.

\* In 1982, Festival of India was held in London (April –September). In April, School teachers were given a booklet entitled, "Be Prepared." In the selected bibliography we find – *Great Mughals* by Bamber Gascoigne.

### **It is like a lamb leading a lamb!**

\* In 1977, Prof Ram Nath of Agra University, India, published his book *Agra and its Monumental glory*. In Appendix E, page 94, he says, "Tavernier, the French jeweller, was in Agra during 1640-41 on his second voyage to the East and again in August-September 1665 on his sixth and the last voyage. He confirms,



' twenty-thousand men worked incessantly. '

Prof Nath conveniently forgets that by the same confession, Tavernier could not have seen the commencement or completion of Taj Mahal! But he simply wants to use the figure of 20,000 men to support his argument.

*Where was Tavernier during his fourth voyage in 1651 to 1655?*

He left Paris in June 1651 and travelled by the following route.

Paris - Marseilles - Alexandretta - Aleppo (in Syria, 7 Oct 1651) - Bandar Abbas (a port in southern Iran) - Masulipattam (East coast of India, 2 July 1652) - Madras - Gandikot (13 August 1652) - Golconda - Goa - Surat (November 1652) - Ahmedabad - Surat - Aurangabad - Golconda (1 April 1653) - Surat - Bandar Abbas - Ispahan (Iran) - Paris (autumn 1655).

By no stretch of imagination could he have been in Agra in 1653, as Vincent Smith suggests.

*Was there any other contemporary traveller?*

### **MANRIQUE**

Yes. Fray Sebastian Manrique, a Portuguese missionary was in Agra between 24th December 1640 and 20th January 1641.

[Ref :- *Travels of Frey Sebastian Manrique*, translated by Lt Col C E Luard and Father H Hosten 1927, Vol ii, pp 171/174 ]

*Does he say ' Construction of Taj Mahal has started?'*

No.

*Does he say ' 20,000 men were working incessantly? '*

No.

*Then what does he say?*

He says only 1,000 men were working.

*What were they doing?*

He says, "... Many were occupied in laying out ingenious gardens, others planting shady groves and ornamental avenues; while the rest were making roads and those receptacles for crystal water, without which their labour could not be carried out. "

*Is that all?*

Yes.

*No masons, no bricklayers, no stone dressers, no stonecutters, no one mixing mortar?*

No.

*When was 'Manrique's Travels' available in English?*

In 1927.

### **DISCREPANCY IN ACCOUNTS**

*Manrique says '1,000 men were working ' and Tavernier says ' 20,000 men worked incessantly.' There is quite a discrepancy between their accounts. When was Manrique's book originally published?*

*Manrique's Travels* were first published in Spanish in 1649, there was a second edition in 1653. Copies of his book are not common. The British Museum and the Bodleian Institute (Oxford) have copies of the 1649 edition, and All Souls College one of that of 1653.

*Could it be that as a result of this book in Spanish not being commonly available we had to wait till the English translation was available in 1927?*

Not quite. Some Historians were aware of the discrepancy well before 1927, but they hid the discrepancy from the readers. Here are some examples -

\* In 1879 H G Keene gives some information from *Manrique's Travels* in his book *'Turks in India'*. He does say that Manrique was in Agra in 1640 and that he saw only 1,000 men working.

But, Keene kept quiet about the discrepancy even after 1889 when

details of Tavernier's voyages were known by English readers.

\* Vincent Smith who helped Dr V Ball to annotate the 1889 edition of *Tavernier's Travels*, also hides the fact that both Tavernier and Manrique were in Agra in 1640. In 1911 Smith says, ' ...The number (20,000) rests on Tavernier's excellent authority. According to Manrique, the staff of workmen numbered only 1,000 in 1640. **No doubt the numbers varied much from time to time** '

(*History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon* by Vincent Smith, 1911 pp 412-419).

Vincent Smith was an officer in the Indian Civil Service. He was on his leave in England in 1889. This is when he helped Dr V Ball with translation of Tavernier's book in French and annotation thereof.

[Note – ICS Indian Civil Service, a career civil service in India for young Britons. The recruits came predominantly from Oxford and Cambridge. In 1910, starting salary for new entrants was Rupees 4,800 per month (£3,840 per year). Both, Ball and Smith came from Dublin.]

\* In 1914, Sir R C Temple does refer to Manrique's book when compiling *Peter Mundy's Travels*, but says nothing about the discrepancy.

\* In 1924, Maulavi M Ahmad was aware of Manrique's account. But he was simply interested to argue that Shahjahan invited all eminent architects, and that Muhammad Isa Afandi was the Architect of Taj Mahal. M Ahmad tells us quite correctly that Manrique was in Agra from 24 December 1640 to January 1641.

(Ref - *Taj and its Environments*, 1924, pp16-19)

*Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique (1629-1643)* was translated by Lt Col C E Luard and Father H Hosten in 1927. *What do they say about the discrepancy?*

Col Luard says, " Manrique's figure is certainly a rough one. .... **Tavernier says 20,000 men worked incessantly**. Manrique, however is writing long after and without notes and again his visit seems to have been but cursory."

This is preposterous. Manrique travelled in the Far East and India for 12 years (1629-1641). Yet, Luard is saying that Manrique wrote his

account of stay in Agra long time afterwards and he had made no notes. Moreover, Luard suggests that Manrique's visit was cursory because his figure of 1,000 men does not tally with Tavernier's 20,000 men.

It is also interesting to note that Manrique's *Travels* was first published in 1649, while Tavernier's *Travels* in 1675, some 28 years later.

*After 1927, however, how do the historians explain the discrepancy, when both Tavernier and Manrique were in Agra at the same time having travelled by the same road from Dacca?*

They simply pay no attention to it.

*Why should they do that?*

Because they wanted to perpetuate the myth. The trouble is that the figures of 20,000 men working for 22 years have been repeated so often that people just can't accept the fact that this is a mere fantasy. At a glance let us see who had repeated the story.

Author	Year	Title of book
Major Thorn	1813	Memoir of War in India
Lt Col Sleeman	1844	Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official
Fanny Parks	1850	Wandering of a pilgrim in the search of the picturesque...
Henry Beveridge (Advocate)	1862	History of India
H G Keene, ICS	1874	Handbook to Agra*
-----	1875	Encyclopaedia Britannica 9 <sup>th</sup> edition
Le Bon Gustave	1887	Les Civilisations de L'Inde *
Thomas Twining (Governor of Bihar)	1893	Travels in India, a Hundred years ago.
E B Havell	1904	Agra and Taj *
V A Smith, ICS	1911	History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon

Lt Col Luard & Father H Hosten	1927	Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique
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\* These three authors say that time of construction was 17 years, but try to justify 22 years by saying that it took 22 years for total completion.

### **J A De MANDELSLO**

*Did any visitor go to Agra before 1640?*

Yes. J A de Mandelslo, a German was in Agra in October/ November 1638.

[Ref :- *The Voyages and Travels of J Albert Mandelslo*, by Olearius Adam, London, 1662.]

*What does he say about the construction of Taj Mahal?*

Absolutely nothing. He, however, describes Red Fort of Agra in detail. He describes the Mughal treasure, i.e. ready money, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, statues of gold, brass, copper, brocades, books, artillery, horses, elephants and other valuables. He tells us of king's ministers and their duties, gives details of cavalry, artillery, guards and other military items. He also describes celebrations of Nauros and king's birthday. He even describes the fights of lions, bulls, elephants, tigers and leopards arranged by Shahjahan.

*But no Taj Mahal?*

That's right!

*Don't the historians refer to Mandelslo?*

Some do, but keep quiet about that fact that he says nothing about Taj Mahal. These include –

Sir R C temple,	1914,	<i>Travels of Peter Mundy</i>
Ball and Crooke,	1925,	<i>Tavernier's Travels in India</i>
Walderman Hansen,	1973.	<i>The Peacock Throne</i>

## **PETER MUNDY**

*Did any other traveller go to Agra before 1638?*

Yes. Peter Mundy from Penryn, Cornwall (South West England), a merchant of the (English) East India Company, stationed at Agra was there during the following periods --

- from 1 January 1631 and 17th December 1631  
(nearly the whole of 1631)
- from 16 January 1632 to 6 August 1632 and  
(6 1/2 months in 1632)
- from 22 December 1632 to 25 February 1633.  
(2 months)

But these are dates according to the Julian calendar. As The Gregorian Calendar is now followed, the dates will be -

- from 12 January 1631 and 28th December 1631  
(nearly the whole of 1631)
- from 27 January 1632 to 17 August 1632 and  
(6 1/2 months in 1632)
- from 2 January 1633 to 8 March 1633. (2 months)

[ Ref – *The Travels of P Mundy*, Volume II Travels in Asia, edited by Lt Col Sir R C Temple, C.I.E, 1914]

*When did Shahjahan's wife die?*

She died on 17th Zi-il-quada 1040 A.H (i.e. 7th June 1631 A.D) at Burhanpur in Central India, some 500 miles south of Agra. Historians say she was buried at Burhanpur.

*The news of her death must have come as a great shock to the people of Agra. There must have been public mournings and business activities must have been suspended for weeks. What has Mundy recorded about this?*

He says absolutely nothing! He does not even mention the news of her death! We must remember that he was in Agra for more than six months after the lady's death. He does say – "(her body was) brought from Burhanpur where she dyed accompanying him (Shahjahan) in his

wars.”

### **Burial of Mumtaz.**

*Is it correct that after her death, Mumtaz was buried at Burhanpur?*

Not quite. Archaeological Survey of India gives some very interesting details. It says, “The body of Mumtaz-Mahal was given a temporary burial in the building situated in the middle of a large tank inside the garden at Zainabad, opposite to Burhanpur, on the other side of the (river) Tapti. After about a week or so, in the evening of Thursday, 25 Dhu'l-Qa'da 1040 (15 June 1631) to be exact, **Shah Jahan crossed the (river) Tapti, went to the place of temporary burial**, ‘shed oceans of lustrous gems of tear over that sanctified grave.’ and returned after reciting Fatiha prayers etc.”

(Ref - *Taj Museum*, a booklet by Dr Z A Desai and H K Kaul published by the Director General, ASI , New Delhi 1982, page 4)

In 1924, M Ahmad also gave us a hint. He says, “The remains, in accordance with the eastern custom, were deposited temporarily in the Garden of Zenabad near the Tapti in Burhanpur. .... On Thursday, the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month of Zikad, the king went to the garden, **on the other side of the river**, and offered the prayers.”

Ref - *Taj and its Environments*, p10.

*Why should the body of the lady be buried in such an awkward location? She could have easily been buried on the bank of the river, where ShahJahan was encamped.*

Well, this point was never raised. Strange enough, Prof Jadunath Sarkar was aware of this situation. In 1912, in his book *Anecdotes of Aurangzeb* he says on p46, “Zainabad is the name of a town near the bank of the (river) Tapti opposite Burhanpur ”

We will explain later the reason for this peculiar burial.

*When was her coffin brought to Agra?*

On 15th Jamat-Ul-Sanya 1041 A.H that is 8 January 1632 A.D according to Archaeological Survey of India.

*This itself raises an important question. Muslims do not bury the bodies of the dead in coffins. Bodies are wrapped in cloth and lowered in ground. We have seen this recently when King Hussein of Jordan (1999) and King Fahad of Saudi Arabia died (2005). After six months the body of Shahjahan's wife would have decomposed and stinking badly, What do the historians say about this?*

They completely overlook this vital detail

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*Coming back to Mundy's account, Shahjahan must have accompanied the coffin of his wife to Agra.*

No.

*When did he come to Agra?*

1st Zi-il-Hijja 1041 A.H that is 1 June 1632 A.D according to Mundy (This will be 12 June 1632 as per Gregorian calendar).

*Mundy must have noticed that Shahjahan was a grief stricken man.*

Oh no. He says Shahjahan entered Agra with all the pomp and glory. There was no sign of sorrow for the loss of Mumtaz.

*What does Mundy say about Taj Mahal?*

\* (In Agra) **places of note** (in and about) are the Castle, King [Akbar's] tomb, Taje Moholl's tomb, Gardens and Bazare.... (pages 208/9)

*How did the tomb whose construction had just started become a 'Place of note'?*

Good question. Mundy says, " This Kinge is now buildinge a Sepulchre for his late deceased Queene Tege Moholl..... He intends it shall excell all other. The place appoynted is by the river side where she is buried, brought from Burhanpur where she dyed accompanying him in his wars. .... " (p212)

Mundy continues, " **There is already about her Tombe a raile of**



**gold.** The building is begun and goes on with excessive labour and cost, prosecuted with extraordinary diligence, Gold and silver esteemed common metal and marble but as ordinaire stones. He intends, as some think, to remove all the City hither, causing hills to be made level because they might not hinder the prospect of it, places appointed for streets, shops etc dwellings, commanding merchants, shopkeepers, Artificers to inhabit where they begin to repaire and called by her name Taje Gange." (pp213/4)

*Does he say on what date he saw this?*

No. But it would be fairly reasonable to assume that the construction started sometime after Shahjahan arrived in Agra i.e. after 12 June 1632.

*Taj Mahal is situated on the bank of river Yamuna (Jumna). Does it not get flooded in June, July, August and September?*

Yes. First, the melting of snow in the Himalayas then the monsoon causes floods.

Bernier, the French doctor who stayed in India during 1658-1665 notes, "Happily for Sultan Sujah, the shower that fell so opportunely, was the commencement of those **incessant and heavy rains with which the country is visited in the months of July, August, September, and October.** "

(*Travels in the Mogul Empire* by F Bernier, 1891 edition p82)

*Then, the construction of Taj Mahal must have started after October 1632. Mundy was in Agra from 2 January 1633 to 8 March 1633. If, as Mundy says, "The building is begun and goes on with excessive labour etc." Flood defence works must have been the first priority. What has Mundy recorded?*

Nothing! Absolutely nothing!!

*That's strange.*

*The banks of the river Yamuna have been formed by the alluvial sediment deposited over hundreds of years by the river. The ground is so soft that hard stratum is not encountered even at 700 to 800 ft. The foundation of Taj Mahal must have been, therefore, massive.*

Of course they are. The foundation wells are described in the following reports of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) :-

\* Annual Report of 1936-1937, Section I, Conservation, United Provinces, p4 line 14

\* Annual Report of 1957-58 page 83,

\* Annual Report of 1958-59 page 95 plate XCIIA

*Do Historians recognise this obvious structural requirement?*

With one exception, most don't want to know.

*Why?*

They wish to maintain the legend. There is a reference to foundations in Cambridge History of India, 1937, Volume IV Mughal Period. Taj Mahal is described on pages 561-567. Mr Percy Brown tells us, ".... At the same time, its proximity to the river, demanded special care in the preparation of foundations which it was the practice of the Mughal builders to support on masonry cylinders. Some such system was no doubt employed in the substructure of the terrace." [But Brown quotes no reference from any court chronicle.]

*What has Mundy recorded?*

Nothing!

*That's strange!!*

*Tell me, why historians don't want to know about the flood defences and foundations?*

The reason is simple. They cannot explain why Mundy saw no such works, which are time consuming and don't fit in the time table of legend.

We have to conclude that both the flood defences and heavy foundations did exist when Mundy was in Agra.

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Now, we are faced with another problem.

*What?*

There are two basement stories under Taj Mahal.

*Where? Why don't we see them?*

### **The hidden basements**

Visitors, after purchasing their tickets, pass through the Main Gateway. They walk in the garden at the end of which we find a huge terrace measuring 1000 ft by 300 ft and 4 ft above garden level. In the middle of this terrace is a 19 ft high plinth lined with marble on which stands the Central Edifice which is said to house the tombs of Mumtaz and Shahjahan. There is building on the west, being used as a Mosque and a building on the east called Jawab.

If we walk to the end of this huge terrace and go to the riverside as far as the grill/ parapet and look down we see two basement stories under the terrace. These are best seen by walking outside to the river bank and looking up.

These are so conspicuous that even a layman can see them unmistakably. But only three authors have mentioned them.

Two basement floors

1801

*Views of the Taje Mahel at the city of Agra in Hindoostan taken in 1789.*  
By Daniells was published.

On page 3 they tell us, " This majestic edifice is stretched on an immense basement 40 feet high."

Moreover, their 'Views' clearly show the two basements, as it depicts Taj Mahal as seen from the riverside.

Note – Thomas and William Daniells were two English painters (uncle and nephew). They were invited by the (English) East India Company for sketching various aspects of life in India. They visited Taj Mahal in 1789.

1844

*Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official* by Lt Col W H Sleeman was published. In Volume II page 27 he tells us that he visited Taj Mahal on 1 January 1836. Opposite page 28 are some pictures. They are :-

The Taj Mahul or Tomb of Noor Mahal wife of Shah Jahan.

No 2. The Taj Mahul. This shows the two basement stories under the main terrace.

1874

*Keene's Handbook to Agra* (revised edition) was published. In the footnote on page 39 he says, "the domes are all of white marble, **the basements of the building only are of red stones.**"

Note – Thus Keene admitted that there are basements under the central edifice. Why did he not want to see what's inside the

basements?

It is interesting to note that Henry George Keene was an officer in the Indian Civil Service (ICS) from 1847 to 1883. He served in the United Province of Oudh and Agra (U.P). He was also President of Agra Archaeological Society. He was deeply involved with the work of Archaeological Survey of India from 1848 to 1882. So, why did he not explore the basements??

More than 100 years have passed since retirement of Keene. Why does not even one single Historian of any nationality mention these basements??? Pictures of these basements are seen in many books. For example –

1912

\* Vincent Smith's book - *History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon* contains a photo of Taj Mahal taken from across the river. It clearly shows the two basements. See page 412.

1924

\* Maulavi M Ahmad's book - *Taj and its Environments*, contains a photograph opposite page 121. The title under the photograph is, "*Panoramic view of Taj Mahal with its Mosque and Jamayat Khana from the river front* "

1977

\* An excellent picture appears on pages 98/99 in the book *Heath Travels* by Mr Edward Heath, former British Prime Minister. It shows that the two stories extend to the entire width of Taj Mahal, i.e. there are at least two stories below the (so called) Jawab and also below the (so called) Mosque.

1981

\* In August 1981, Government of India, Department of Tourism, published a booklet called Uttar Pradesh. It contains a photo of Taj Mahal from the riverside, clearly showing the two basement stories.

Since Mundy does not mention these 2 basement stories, we have to accept that these did exist when Mundy was at Agra.

-----  
Now, there is yet another riddle.

*What?*

Mundy says, "marble is being used as if ordinary stone."

*What is the problem with that?*

Well, the entire construction is of brick, red sandstone and marble are used as lining only. The Mosque and the Jawab are both lined with red sandstone, marble is used on the outside on borders either side of the main arches and also above the arches, and on the exterior of domes.

Marble is also used for lining of the 19 ft high plinth (surface area 23,788sq ft), then on both sides of brickwork of Cenotaph and surrounding rooms and also on the rooms in the upper floor. (surface area about 72,660 sq ft)

The four minarets are lined with marble on the outside. M Ahmad gives the perimeter of each minaret as 64 ft. The marble lining area is therefore  $64 \times 4 \times 116 \text{ ft} = 29,696 \text{ sq ft}$

In addition, marble is used on the exterior of the Main dome, 4 secondary domes and Chhatris over minarets.

Work on this extensive marble lining would NOT have started until all the brickwork has been complete. We have to remember that the top of main dome from garden level is some 213 ft.

\* We therefore have no option but to agree that entire brickwork for the Central Edifice was already in existence when Peter Mundy was in Agra. Thus, we are gradually accepting that the entire building complex was already in existence. Then we must wonder what did Shahjahan build?

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There is one additional complication.

*What?*

### **Mystery of disappearance of Gold and Silver articles from Taj Mahal.**

*In 1633 Mundy mentions that gold and silver were 'esteemed common metals.' What happened to those afterwards?*

They disappeared.

*How?*

Let us see what successive European travellers have noted.

- French physician Bernier visited Taj in 1665, in the company of Tavernier. Bernier says nothing about them.

*Is it possible that he forgot them?*

But then he describes Delhi and Agra in detail and even tells of the fruits and vegetables one could buy in the bazaar (market). He had also tried to estimate total wealth of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. His desire to collect information about Indian History, Geography, Religion, customs and trade, is astonishing. Though he never travelled south, he did obtain a picture of the Maratha King Shivaji.

- *Strange! What about the Italian adventurer Manucci?*

He visited Taj in about 1664. But, he too says nothing about any gold and silver articles.

*May be he too forgot to mention them?*

That suggestion is absurd. He lived in India for more than 50 years and gives a very extensive account of life and conditions existing in India in those days.

- *Manrique visited the Taj in the winter of 1640/41. Does he say anything about gold and silver articles?*

No, but he mentions the wealth of Shahjahan in detail (including gold and silver ornaments)

- *Tavernier visited the Taj in the winter of 1640/41 and then in 1665. What does he say?*

Nothing !

*Why? Did he too forget?*

That is just not plausible. In his book *Travels in India* which runs into 900 pages, he talks about money, money, money and nothing else. For example -

In Book (i.e. chapter) I, he gives us many details e.g. cost of bulls, cost of maintaining elephants, pay of servants etc.

In Book II, he tells us, " ... detailed description of jewels of Great Mogol (pp 394/401) ...

diamonds and mines and rivers where they are found; method of searching for diamonds; coloured stones and places where they are obtained; information about most beautiful diamonds, rubies of Asia; coral and yellow and amber and the places where they are found etc ....  
" (pp 53-132)

In Book III, he mentions the great Maratha King Shivaji and says that while carrying out excavations for some fortifications Shivaji discovered hidden treasure buried in ground (pp205/206). We should remember that Tavernier never met Shivaji, but just consider the information gathered by Tavernier.

[Maratha historians confirm that this was on the fort of Torana, around 1646/7]

\* Tavernier also describes gold, silver and other precious ornaments of gods and goddesses in various temples in India.

\* He was so obsessed with money that he even goes to the extent of giving the details of funeral expenses incurred for his brother Daniell (pp 376-378).

**It is unbelievable that such a person would have forgotten to describe the articles of gold and silver in Taj Mahal, had there been any there. He, on the other hand, notes, " ... an enormous quantity of cottons is sold there. " (p 110)**

So, we have to conclude that Mundy saw extensive use of gold and silver in 1633 in Taj Mahal but no European traveller after 1640 saw any trace of them.

*Where did all the gold and silver go between 1633 and 1640?*

Only Shahjahan could have stripped Taj Mahal of all the precious metals.



*What do the historians say about the mystery of gold and silver, which was mentioned by Peter Mundy in 1633, suddenly disappearing afterwards?*

Historians say absolutely nothing! They do not offer even an absurd explanation.

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There is also another unexplained mystery.

*What?*

In the above quote Mundy tells us, "places appointed for streets, shops etc dwellings, commanding merchants, shopkeepers, Artificers to inhabit where they begin to repair and called by her name Taje Gange."

*So, he is already talking about Craftsmen carrying out repairs!! How?*

This question was never raised.

-----  
*What you say may be true, but doesn't Mundy say on p212, "This king is now building a sepulchre for his late deceased Queen Taje Moholl..."?*  
Yes. But on pages 208 and 209 he also says, "... **Places of note** (in and about it i.e. Agra) **are** castle, King Ecbar's (Akbar's) tombe, **Taje Moholl's** (Taj Mahal's) **Tombe**, garden and Bazare"

This indicates quite explicitly that the ancient building (which was being converted into a mausoleum) did exist in 1632 and it was comparable in grandeur to the Red Fort at Agra. That is why it had become 'a place of note'. It was full of gold and silver which was looted by Shahjahan. Nothing could be simpler.

#### **FACTORY RECORDS**

*Didn't the English and Dutch have their factories (trading posts) at Agra?*

Yes they did.

*Anything in their factory records?*

Nothing! The (English) East India Company had a factory at Agra from 1618 to 1655. And yet there is no mention of the Taj Mahal, Mumtaz Mahal or tomb of the queen of Shahjahan built by him in their records. [Ref :- Foster W, *The English Factories in India*, 1914]

No one has so far referred to Dutch East India Company records. It seems therefore that they do not contain any information about Taj Mahal.

*Is that all?*

Yes. That is all the contemporary records there are. Let us summarise how the Historians made up the legend over the years.

### **GROWTH OF THE TAJ LEGEND**

From 1671 to 1889

\* Tavernier was a great French adventurer of 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was no ordinary matter to travel from France to India and then so extensively in India, carry out a trade in precious stones like diamonds and return to France safely. And he did this not once but five times.

His '*Travels in India*', published in French in 1670 must have caused a sensation in Europe. English translations were available in London since 1671

(English) East India Company was trying to conquer territories in India since the battle of Plassey in 1757. It took them another hundred years to subdue the whole of India. Company's military officers and civil administrators would have certainly read Tavernier's book and must have emphasised in their writings that *Tavernier saw the commencement and completion of Taj Mahal and that 20,000 men worked on it incessantly*. This view was prevalent in England for more than 200 years

1889 to 1914

In 1889, details of all the voyages of Tavernier were known and it was clear that he came to Agra only twice – in the winter of 1640-41 and in 1665. He could not have therefore seen the commencement and completion of Taj Mahal as we proved earlier. And as such, his

statement that 20,000 men worked for 22 years incessantly, is meaningless and should be discarded.

H G Keene did say in 1909 that Tavernier could not have seen the commencement of Taj Mahal. But barring this exception, officers in the Indian Civil Service like Vincent Smith, even after his retirement in 1900, kept on saying – *Tavernier saw the whole thing*. Their authority was unchallenged after the suppression of the Great Revolt against the rule of the English East India Company in 1857-59.

1914 to 1927

\* Accounts of Peter Mundy the Cornish merchant employed by English East India Company were published in 1914.

Mundy was in Agra during 1631 –33. He makes no mention of any foundations, but mentions gold and silver being used as common metal and marble as ordinary stone.

Historians just pick up one sentence from his testimony – “the building is begun and goes on with excessive labour and cost. ” They conceal all other details as we have examined earlier, add 22 years of Tavernier’s account and thus arrive at the legend that the Taj was built between 1631 and 1653 and 20,000 men worked were constantly employed.

The English Factories in India (1630 to 1660) by W Foster was published in 1914. The (English) East India Company had a factory in Agra from 1618 to 1655. But there is no mention of Taj Mahal, Mumtaz Mahal or any tomb of Shahjahan’s wife built by him, in their factory records.

Alas, this did not bother any historians. They simply set aside this information.

1927 onwards

In 1927, Manrique’s *Travels in India* was translated from Spanish into English.

Contrary to Tavernier’s 20,000 men Manrique says only 1,000 men were working.

We saw how this discrepancy was largely set aside and when it was dealt with, how absurd explanations were given for the discrepancy.

Historians make one serious omission. Mundy says, “Gold and silver are being used as if common metal.”

Where did it all go? No European traveller who went to Agra after Mundy (1633), mentions any gold or silver in Taj Mahal, be it Tavernier (French jewel merchant), Manrique (Portuguese missionary), Bernier (French doctor) or Manucci (Italian adventurer). All historians are silent on this aspect.

There was a vague mention in Manrique's account that the Architect was an Italian named Verroneo. No scrutiny was needed because Manrique was a white man!

Historians took the remark of Manrique to mean that the Architect of Taj Mahal must have been a foreigner!

\* J A de Mandelslo a German visited Agra in 1638 but says nothing about the construction of Taj Mahal and his accounts were available in English in 1662. But Historians conveniently ignore him.

Thus, the Taj legend arose from unquestioned reliance placed on European Travellers' accounts. Historians took it for granted that Shahjahan built the Taj Mahal and then looked at the Travellers' accounts for support of their assumption. We saw how wrong they were. Let us now review the limitations of 17<sup>th</sup> century European travellers in India and then see how doubts were raised about reliability of their accounts by historians.

#### **Limitations of 17<sup>th</sup> century European travellers.**

(a) Tavernier was a French jewel merchant and he was travelling in India for his business. He first visited Agra in the winter of 1640-41. He was travelling from Dacca to Surat by the traditional route. So, after travelling some 900 miles he halted at Agra. He had so many things to worry about. For example, he had to make arrangements for his further travel of some 600 miles, search for an interpreter, hire servants and guards for his own protection, may be purchase or hire horses and carts. He could not have imagined that 250 years later his account would be taken as sacrosanct.

- Note - We should also remember that Tavernier did not find out even the name of the lady for whom Taj is supposed to have been built. He simply calls her 'a Begum'.

- Moreover, after describing Taj Mahal, or rather tomb of Begum of Shah Jahan, Tavernier says,  
"When you reach Agra from Delhi side you meet a large bazaar, close to which there is a garden where the king Jahangir, father of Shah Jahan is interred."

We know that Jahangir died in Lahore and was buried there. How could Tavernier make such an obvious mistake? But he did make that mistake and no historian offers any explanation. Why can't they say that he made other mistakes also?

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(b) Manrique was a Portuguese missionary from Oporto. He took religious orders in Goa in 1604 at the age of 17. From 1629 to 1640 he travelled to the Far East (Arakan in Burma, Philippines, Macao in China etc). He passed around Java, Sumatra and Borneo.

In those days, the Portuguese in Hugli (Calcutta) annoyed the Mughals by their behaviour. Shahjahan sought revenge. In 1632, Qasim Khan, one of Shahjahan's generals laid siege to Hugli during low tide and took Portuguese men and women captive and send them to Agra. Among them was Father Antonio de Christo who was imprisoned in Agra.

Manrique sought pardon for this priest. So, on 24 December 1640, Manrique came to Agra from Dacca because the Royal Court used to be at Agra. Unfortunately Shahjahan had moved to Lahore. Manrique sought help of a rich and influential merchant and travelled to Biana (3 days journey). The merchant sent one of his relatives with Manrique to Agra. The Nawab Subdal Chan who had been left as Governor of Agra said to Manrique, "I have no orders for release of Father Christo, but I am due to go to Lahore to see the Emperor."

Manrique decided to follow the Nawab. So he stayed in Agra, but got tired of waiting and decided to travel to Lahore on his own. It was under such circumstances that he made notes of his visit to Agra.

- We should also note here that original name of Shahjahan was Khurram. When he succeeded Jehangir in 1628, he assumed the title Shahjahan. And yet in 1640, 12 years later, Manrique refers to Shahjahan as Corrombo (corruption of Khurram).

- Moreover, like Tavernier, Manrique also did not find out the name of the lady of Taj!! He calls her simply 'a Begum.'

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(c) Peter Mundy was a merchant employed by the (English) East India Company and stationed at Agra. He had a 5 year contract with the company expiring in February 1633. Before that date the Company asked him to go on a commercial mission to Patna some 400 miles away from Agra. He returned to Agra on 22 December 1632 (2 January 1633 as per Gregorian calendar). He then witnessed celebrations of weddings of two of Shahjahan's sons, namely Dara Shukoh and Shah Shuja.

On 25 February 1633 (8 March according to Gregorian calendar) Mundy was placed in charge of Caphila of 268 camels and 109 carts with their lading at the request of the East India Company, and travelled from Agra to Surat, a hazardous journey of three months.

Mundy made whatever notes he could under such circumstances.

Mundy was a compulsive traveller. Before travelling to India, he had already travelled more than 25,000 miles. After his return to England from India in 1634, he again set sail for India and Japan in 1635. In 1640 he travelled in Europe. In 1655 he made his 3<sup>rd</sup> voyage to India, returning to London in 1658 and his home town Penryn in 1663. He started writing his manuscript after this voyage, some 30 years after departing from Agra.

- There is mix up in Mundy's accounts. Shahjahan had rebelled against his father Jahangir and fled south. On hearing the news of death of Jahangir, Shahjahan wanted to return to Agra to claim his throne. But he realised that if he came openly he would be attacked by his rivals to the throne. So, he pretended to be dead and was laid in a coffin which was transported to Agra where he miraculously recovered and came out of the coffin.

Mundy mentions above story and then suddenly adds, "There is alreadye about her Tombe a raile of gold. The buildinge is begun and goes on with excessive labour and cost, prosecuted with extraordinary dilligence, Gold and silver esteemed comon Mettall, and Marble but as ordinarie stones. "

- We cannot make sense of his next sentence "Hee (Shah Jahan) intends, as some thinck, to remove all the Cittie hither, cawseinge hills to be made levell because they might not hinder the prospect of it.... "

The question arises – why would Shahjahan want to move the city of Agra eastwards? There was no need.

-----  
**Re-examination by other historians**

*What you say may be right, but surely some historians would have noted deficiencies in these Travellers' accounts as you have pointed out.*

They did. It is astonishing that though some authors had warned about unreliability of Travellers' accounts, when it comes to Taj Mahal they refuse to use their brains. Here are some examples –

**Tavernier  
1925**

*Travels in India* by Tavernier was translated from original French and annotated by Dr V Ball in 1889. He prepared a new edition but died before he could publish it. His wife gave permission to Mr William Crooke, ICS and the new edition came out in 1925. In it Dr Ball tells us

p xxxii "...The most important question connected with Tavernier's work is the credibility of the narrative. Lord Curzon dealing with his (Tavernier's) Persian travels writes, "...Chardin said he (Tavernier) never understood a word of Persian...His description of some places are manifestly incorrect. "

p xxxiii "...Whatever may have been his knowledge of Persian, it is certain that he had little or no acquaintance with any of the languages of India and he was always obliged to do his business through an interpreter. It is now impossible to say what record in the shape of notes or diaries, he kept during his wanderings; his book gives no information on this point. For matters of which, he was not an eyewitness he depended on the merchants' tales current in ports and cities which he visited...Unfortunately neither of these writers (i.e. Tavernier and Dr J Fryer) thought it necessary to distinguish clearly between information based on his own experience and that acquired, in the case of Tavernier, from shipmasters or other travellers, particularly priests

and friars of the Roman Catholic Church, whose friendship he enjoyed."

p xxxv "...We must remember that he (i.e. Tavernier) was not a scientifically trained observer who visited India with the intention of describing the country and its people. He observed it from the point of view of a merchant."

On pages xi to lix we find Some Additional Notes on Tavernier's History and Geography by H A Rose of Jersey. At the very beginning he says, "As a historian, Tavernier is not always to be trusted."

p xliv "...Tavernier was certainly not always an eye witness to events which he claims to have seen..... Tavernier's account of Bijapur has raised a surmise that he never visited that city."

**1969**

*Taj Mahal, a dream in Marble*, a special issue of MARG magazine of Bombay was published in June. Prof Ram Nath does doubt reliability of Tavernier. He tells us -

p 52 (i)The Story of a Second Taj.

**"According to the popular legend**, Shah Jahan proposed to construct another Taj in black marble on the other side of the river Jumna and to connect them by a bridge. It has been recorded almost contemporarily by Tavernier who noted " Shahjehan began to build his own tomb on the other side of the river but the war with his own sons interrupted his plan and Aurangzeb who reigns at present is not disposed to complete it."

"Later Gazetteers and guide-books mention it almost invariably. Particularly Moinuddin attached greatest credit to the idea and went to the extent of suggesting traces of the un-matured plan on the other side. Mehtab Burj and the wall which adjoins it opposite the Taj mahal are generally said to be the foundations and remains of the proposed plan."

**"It is a misconception; the idea belongs more to fiction than to history. Tavernier seems to have recorded a rumour [ Bravo ! ] His own account is self-contradictory and is not reliable in view of facts and figures of history.** He was in India on his second voyage to the East in 1640-41, when the Taj was under construction and a replica on the other side of the river could not have been begun, He was again at Agra in August-September 1665. .... Lahauri and Kambo, the contemporary Persian chroniclers do not make the slightest



mention of this plan. [Very true. But the same remarks should also apply to other details.] The traces which are identified as the foundations of the second Taj cannot be associated in this way. The masonry structure which extends to the west of the Mehtab Burj is not a foundation but the enclosing wall of the Mehtab Bagh which was founded by Babur

[this is yet another misconception] ... The Mehtab Burj is single storeyed crowned by a chhatri and stands hardly 12 ft above the river. The north-east tower of the Taj, on the other hand, is multi-storeyed with a complex arrangement of rooms and verandahs and stands 43 ft above the river. The two vastly differ in plan as well as in elevation and **by no stretch of imagination can the former be a replica of the latter."**

### **1971**

*The Great Mughals* by Bamber Gascoigne was published. In this book we find -

p 222 -"Jean Baptise Tavernier, who was in India, at the time [i.e. in 1666] recorded that Shah Jahan had intended a replica of the Taj in black marble to be built as his own mausoleum on the opposite bank of the Jumna connected with his wife's by a bridge, but that the parsimonious Aurangzeb refused to carry out this grand design and placed his father without more ado in the existing Taj. **The legend has been current ever since, although there is no other contemporary evidence to support it."**

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### **Manrique**

#### **1927**

*Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique (1629-1643)* was translated by Lt Col C E Luard, C I E. and Father H Hosten, and published by Hakluyt Society. In

Volume I the authors tell us :-

p 170 "...The account given shows that Manrique's description is mainly from heresay...Mundy notes that no one could enter the tomb of Akbar."

p 199 "...The whole description of the palace and throne is unconvincing and looks as if it was taken from some account Manrique found and perhaps from what he read."

p 203 "... It is worth considering how much of this account refers to what was actually seen by Manrique and how much is derived (as he is entirely devoid of scruple in such matters) from what he read."

p 274 "...One cannot accept this statement reliable in view of the proofs of Manrique's plagiarism from De Laet. But this list of Mansabdars appears to be at least in part original; at any rate it differs here and there from de Laet."

p 297 "...Manrique never obtained this information locally (as he maintains) but plagiarized shamelessly without acknowledgement, taking this account out of de Laet."

These are just a few examples of un-reliability of Manrique. And if they are not sufficient, **Manrique even claims to have seen secretly Shahjahan and Asaf Khan having a dinner with their ladies!** Something, which even the highest noblemen would not have dared to do. Manrique says,

(Vol II pp 213-220) - " ... A eunuch conducted us there, and warned us not to make sound, and should we be forced to make any, in being obliged to rid of ourselves of un-restrainable and importunate phlegm, we were to go into an adjoining room, which he pointed out to us....."

"When the time came and Emperor entered, accompanied by a large bevy of gallant, handsome women...Following this lovely bevy of women came and the Emperor between his mother-in-law and his daughter, leading the former on his right and the latter on his left."

"Just behind came the heir-apparent, Prince Sultan Dara Sucur, with his grandfather, Assofo Kan, on his right. .... "

"First of all four lovely girls, relations of Prince Assofo Kan and daughters of great Noblemen, entered.... The dinner was brought in rich golden dishes..."

" ... On the conclusion of this idle discourse the dinner ended also, after lasting over four hours.... When the feast had reached this stage, our eunuch returned to fetch us, telling us it was time we left, for if we stayed to the end it would be very difficult for us..."

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Neither Col Luard nor Father Hosten make any comments on such a fantastic claim. They express no surprise. In footnote number 10 on page 215, they tell us, " it appears that the *parda* (veil) was not maintained among such near relatives. In many Indian Musulman families, however, it is curiously strict nowadays and no such meeting, as is described would be possible. "These gentlemen conveniently forgot to tell us that, had Manrique even come within talking distance from where the ladies of the harem were present, he would have been cut to pieces by the eunuchs. Italian adventurer Nicoloi Manucci says so clearly. The question is not whether such a meeting was possible, but whether Manrique could have seen it at all. In footnote number 3 on page 213, the authors simply say, "As *pardanishin* (secluded) ladies were to be present their looking on (*by other males*) would have given serious offence."

Both gentlemen had lived and worked in India, Father Hosten lived in Calcutta and belonged to the Society of Jesuits. Luard was an officer in the 8th Gurkhas for six years (1890-96) and was later entrusted with political work in Central India i.e. keeping an eye on Rajas and Maharajas (1897-1925).

Note – In India, Muslim women lived an excluded life in the Harem or Zanana of Muslim Kings. Manucci, the Italian adventurer lived in India for more than 50 years. He did not even have a glance at any Muslim women. Edward VIII as Prince of Wales visited India in 1921. There is a public photograph of him and Begum of Bhopal. The Begum is wearing full burqua (veil) and yet Col Luard and Father Hosten would have us believe that in 1641 it was possible for Manrique to gaze for 4 hours at Shahjahan's daughters and mother-in-law!!

There is no limit to which traditionalists would go to support the Taj Legend.

### **1971**

*The Great Mughals* by Bamber Gascoigne, famous presenter of the T V Programme " University Challenge " was published. In this book we find

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p 189

Referring to Manrique who claims to have observed for four hours, a banquet at Lahore in 1641 at which the ladies of the Royal Mughal Harem were present, Gascoigne says, " One needs to treat travellers'

tales of the time with some caution, since there was a convention of presenting hearsay under the guise of personal experience."

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### **Travellers in general**

**1949**

*Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri* by Surendranath Sen, Director of Government Archives, New Delhi, was published. Regarding the value of travellers' accounts, Sen says in the preface :-

p lxiv "...But they had their limitations as well. Their knowledge of the country and its people was in most cases superficial and the value of their accounts necessarily depended upon the sources of their information. They suffered from common credulity of their age and they were not always in a position to verify or test the accuracy of what they were told. Their veracity is not to be questioned but we need not accept anything on trust..."

"Their learning, their integrity, their sincerity are not suspected. Yet we may not be able to accept all their statements as equally authentic without a sifting enquiry as to their sources that may not always be equally irreproachable ...**As a contemporary source of Indian History, they will always remain indispensable, but what cannot be dispensed with is not necessarily infallible.**"

\* What a pity these words were not heeded.

### **OFFICIAL CHRONICLE OF SHAHJAHAN**

*Haven't you forgotten one thing?*

What?

*The British Historians have pointed out that the Hindu Kings had no sense of History and kept no sensible historical records. It was the Muslim Rulers who started keeping historical records relating to their rule. So, what about the official records of Shahjahan?*

Well, there was a *Badshahnama* – an official chronicle of the reign of Shahjahan. The Persian text of the same was published by Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1867. The compilers were two Muslims, Maulavi Kabir Al Din Ahmad and Maulavi Abd Al Rahim. They worked under the superintendence of Major W N Lees.

*Was there an English translation of Badshahnama?*

NO. There were translations of chronicles of Shahjahan's forefathers, but not of Shahjahan. Here is the list

Chronicle	Year of English translation	Translator
Babur-Nama (2 volumes)	1905	Annette Beveridge
Humayun-Nama	1902, London Royal Asiatic society	Annette Beveridge
Ain-e-Akbari part I	1873, Calcutta	Prof H F Blochman & H S Jarrett
Ain-e-Akbari part II	1897, Calcutta	Prof H F Blochman & H S Jarrett
Akbar- Nama of Abul Fazal	1897, Calcutta	Henry Beveridge
Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri part I	1909, London	A Rogers and H Beveridge
Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri part II	1914, London	Annette Beveridge

[Note -Henry Beveridge was an ICS officer who worked in Bengal. Annette was his wife]

*So, what happened to Badshahnama? Why was it not translated into English?*

All the Historians are quiet on this question. The British ruled India for 80 years after publication of *Badshahnama*, but no British Historian was interested in translating the *Badshahnama* into English. We must ask WHY??? What were they hiding?

Moreover why is it that not a single European or American scholar was

interested in undertaking the translation for the last 139 years. Why??

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*Is the Badshahnama at least referred to in the Bibliographies of various authors?*

We find NO reference to *Badshahnama* in the following works –

1873

*A Handbook for visitors to Agra* by H G Keene

1874

*A Handbook for visitors to Agra* (revised edition) by  
H G Keene

1875

9<sup>th</sup> edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

1879

*Turks in India* by H G Keene

1881

*Imperial Gazetteer of India* by Sir W W Hunter

1882

*Murray's Handbook of Bengal*

1888

*A Handbook for visitors to Agra* (revised edition) by  
H G Keene

1889

*Travels in India* by Tavernier – Translated from original French and  
annotated by Dr V Ball

1891

*Murray's Handbook (for travellers to) Indian and Ceylon*

1893

*Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official* by Col Sleeman – edited

by Vincent Smith.

Notes :-

Henry George Keene was an officer in the ICS and worked in the United Province of Oudh and Agra (U.P.) from 1847 to 1883.

Vincent A Smith was also an officer in the ICS. He too worked in the U.P from 1871 to 1900.

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We do find Badshahnama referred to for the first time in 1877, but with a twist.

1877

*History of India as told by its Own Historians*, Volume VII dealing with reigns of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb by Elliot and Dowson was published.

It is astonishing that, though pages 3 to 72 contain translations of extracts from some pages of *Badshahnama*, there is no mention of Taj Mahal and the authors did not express any surprise!! It is even more astonishing that no 'Gentleman Cadets' at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst asked any questions about it either. Those Cadets were said to have been the cream of the British Society.

Volume VIII of above works was also published in 1877. It contains a 79-page index covering all the eight volumes. And yet the words *Taj Mahal* do not exist in the index.

Note -The above work was originally compiled by Sir Henry M Elliot. It is based on chronicles of various Muslim Rulers of India. Sir Elliot was Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department. He died in 1853. After his death his work was edited and published by Prof Dowson, who taught at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.

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*When was the Badshahnama referred to by any other author?*

That was in 1896. We do find references to the Badshahnama in the book *Agra Historical and Descriptive* by Syed Muhammad Latif, Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

Latif does refer to Badshahnama and says on p105 –

**"The site selected for the mausoleum was to the south of the**

**City. It was originally a palace of Raja Man Singh, but it was the property of his grandson, Raja Jai Singh."**

This confession solves all the mysteries –

\* What Shahjahan grabbed was a Palace of Late Raja Man Singh (of Jaipur). Therefore there is no mention of any foundations required, in Mundy's account.

\* Gold and silver were used extensively in the construction of this palace. Peter Mundy mentions them in 1633 and then they suddenly disappear from sight.

\* It also solves another mystery – that of planning and design.

In 1942 Percy Brown published *Indian Architecture (Islamic Period)*. He tells us -

p 116 "...one of the most striking facts in connection with the architectural projects of this period, is the amount of preliminary thought that must have been expended on them before the actual construction was begun. **The building art as practised by the Mughals, permitted no subsequent amendments or after-thoughts, each undertaking was initially perfected in all its parts with every need anticipated "**

[As we shall see later, Brown does not explain the purposes of two Nagar Khanas or Drumhouses, Jawab and also chambers which remain sealed even today. Moreover, Shahjahan came to Agra on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1632, and Peter Mundy left Agra on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1633, just nine months later. In between two Princes of Shahjahan got married. Was that sufficient time for all the planning involved? Moreover, Mundy says, "...There is already about her tomb, a rail of gold." How is this feasible in a new construction?]

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It is interesting to see what happened after Latif's book was published in 1896

1898

*Keene's Handbook to Agra, Delhi etc was published.* No reference in it to either Badshahnama or Latif.

1901



*Murray's Handbook for Travellers to India* was edited by J Burgess, former Director General of Archaeological Survey of India. No reference in it to either Badshahnama, or Latif

1904

*Agra and Taj* by E B Havell was published. Havell was the Principal of Government School of Arts, Calcutta. He tells us on pp 73/74 –  
“According to the old Tartar custom, a garden was chosen as a site for the tomb. ... The old tradition laid down that it must be acquired by fair means, and not by force or fraud. [Havell does not say from where he got this information. Moreover, why should any one need to acquire land for burial, by force or fraud? ] **So, Rajah Jey Singh to whom the garden belonged was compensated by the gift of another property from the Emperor's private estate.**” [why did not Shahjahan build the tomb on his own land?]

Havell does NOT refer to Badshahnama or Latif.

1905

*History of Taj* by Moin-ud-din Ahmad was published. He does refer to Badshahnama and Latif. And yet on page 12 we find, “ .. **The plot on which the mausoleum stands belonged to Raja Man Singh's grandson Raja Jai Singh.** It was exchanged for a good piece of land in the royal domains  
(Ref – Badshahnama of Mulla Abdul Hamid of Lahore, Volume I, p403)

Agra District Gazetteer

By sheer coincidence, Agra District Gazetteer was also published in 1905. In the bibliography we find Latif but NO Badshahnama! And we are told –

p154 “While encamped in Burhanpur his wife, Arjumand Banu better known as Mumtaz Mahal, died in childbirth and was buried there. Six months later her remains were sent to Agra and **interred in the garden of Raja Jai Singh** to the south of the city. Over her resting-place the emperor erected the famous tomb known as the Taj Mahal.”

pp 212-216

“The name Taj Mahal is corruption of her title and is unknown to early writers. ... **Her body was interred in a portion of the garden of Raja Man Singh.**”

(which was in the possession of his grandson Raja Jai Singh)

\*\* Thus, what was known as **Raja Mansingh's Palace** had suddenly become **Raja Mansingh's piece of land in 1905!!** As the person who deliberately twisted this fact was Mr H R Nevill of the Indian Civil Service, others meekly followed him afterwards. Let us just see some examples

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1909

7<sup>th</sup> edition of H G Keene's *Handbook for visitors to Agra* was rewritten and brought up to date by E A Duncan, C.E, F.G.S.

There are references to Latif (pp14,16 and112) and Badshahnama (p161 &178). And yet we find on page 149, " ... For six months, her remains lay in a temporary grave at the place of her death, and in the meantime **a garden at Agra, known as that of Raja Man Singh but then owned by his grandson Raja Jai Singh was selected for her permanent internment. This garden was exchanged for equally valuable state land.**"

1910

11<sup>th</sup> edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica was published. No Badshahnama and no Latif.

1911

*History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon* by Vincent Smith was published. Taj Mahal is described on pages 412-419. In a footnote Smith does refer to Latif, but overlooks the vital information by Latif namely that the site chosen for the mausoleum was late Raja Mansingh's Palace..

1912

*Anecdotes of Aurangzeb and other Historical Essays* by Prof Yadunath Sarkar was published. He tells us –

pp 148/9 THE TAJ, ITS BUILDERS AND STONES

" **A special tract of land, south of Agra city, was chosen for the burial place, and purchased from its owner, Rajah Jai Singh, the grandson of Man Singh.** (Padishahnama, i, 403)."

1914

*The travels of P Mundy*, Volume II Travels in Asia was edited by Lt Col

Sir R C Temple, C I E. In the bibliography we do find Latif's book of 1896. But Sir Temple does not mention what Latif has said.

1921

Agra District Gazetteer – 2<sup>nd</sup> edition was published, but no change in the information from that was already provided in 1905 edition

1924

*The Taj and its Environment* by M Ahmad was published. This is the second edition of the book published in 1905 under the title – *History of Taj*. We find –

pp 9 -10

"Mumtaz died at Burhanpur in 1040 A.H (1630 A.D). ... The remains, in accordance with the eastern custom, were deposited temporarily in the Garden of Zenabad near the (river) Tapti in Burhanpur."

p 13

" ... Six months after Mumtaz Mahal's death, her remains were conveyed from Burhanpur to the Capital Akbarabad (Agra), under the charge of Prince Shuja and of Satiu-Nisa Khanum ... The Begam and the King's physician, Wazir Khan, accompanied the escort." (Badshahnama, Volume I pp 402-403)

p14

**The plot on which the Mausoleum stands originally belonged to Raja Man Singh**, and was, in Shah Jahan's time, in the possession of Raja's grandson, Raja Jaisingh. It was exchanged for a good piece of land in the royal domain.

(Badshshnama, Volume I, p403)

In the footnote we find details of Raja Man Singh and Raja Jai Singh.

1925

Tavernier's *Travels in India* was again edited by William Crooke of the Bengal Civil Service. In the preface he tells us that Dr Valentine Ball revised his 1889 edition but died before he could publish the revised second edition. William Crooke was allowed by Mrs Ball to publish it, and had made several corrections.

There is reference to Latif on page 87, but not to Badshahnama and no change in the basic information on Taj Mahal.

**Thus, 58 years after the publication of its Persian text, Badshahnama was not referred to by most historians. There was reluctance to refer to Latif's book of 1896 also, but when authors do refer to Latif they take no note of what he says. What was grabbed by Shahjahan was Raja Man Singh's Palace and NOT Raja Man Singh's piece of land.** We have to wait till 1968 when Mr P N Oak published his book *Taj Mahal is a Hindu Place*. On pages 20-27 he gives full Persian text of Badshahnama Volume I pp 402-403 and its word-by-word translation in English.

On page 403 of Badshahnama we are told – “Raja Mansingh's palace, at that time owned by Raja Jaisingh (grandson of Raja Mansingh) was selected for burial of Arjumand Banu Begum alias Mumtaz-ul-Zamani.” (not Mumtaz Mahal as Encyclopaedia Britannica asserts). Although Raja Mansingh valued it greatly as his ancestral heritage and property, yet he would have been agreeable to part with it gratis for the Emperor Shajahan. (still) out of sheer scrupulousness so essential in matters of bereavement and religious sanctity (thinking it improper to take his palace gratis) in exchange of that (aali Manzil) grand palace, he (Jaisingh) was granted a piece of government land after the arrival of the dead body in that great city (Agra) on 15<sup>th</sup> Jamad-ul-Saniya.”

“No payment was made to Raja Jaisingh.”

“Badshahnama mentions vaguely that a piece of Government land was given to him as compensation for losing this grand palace.”

And yet we find that authors like Sir Yadunath Sarkar and Maulavi Moin-un-Din Ahmad, refer to same Badshshnama, Volume I page 403 and state that Raja Mansingh's piece of land was taken over by Shahjahan.

*Is Mr Oak's translation correct?*

Absolutely. As I mentioned in the preface, the translation was done for him by a Persian Expert. Mr Oak is the only person who has published full Persian text of pages 402/403 and word by word translation in English.

We should note how similar looting is reported elsewhere in the world. Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab died in 1839. East India Company fought wars with the Sikhs for the next ten years. They defeated the

Sikhs in 1849 and looted prized possessions of Ranjit Singh, including the famous Kohinoor diamond. And how is this described in the Crown Jewels section in the Tower of London? Ranjit Singh's son presented the Kohinoor diamond to Queen Victoria!!

In a similar manner the official chronicler of Shahjahan says that Raja Jaisingh was prepared to give his palace free to Shahjahan for burial of Mumtaz. What else do we expect?

There are yet similar examples during the British Raj. Some Hindu Maharaja invited the British Political Agent, his wife and his daughter to see his personal collection of valuables. The British ladies picked up some precious necklaces or bracelets, and put them on to look in the mirror. But then there was no question of giving them back. The ladies simply walked away with the valuable jewellery! Their collection in England would now have a note – presented to so and so by Maharaja

...

Once the attitude of the British ladies was known, other Maharajas became wiser and were reluctant to show their private possessions to the British Political Agents.

### **Raja Mansingh's palace is Taj Mahal**

Something strange happened in 1982. In 1981, I had sent copies of letters published in the RIBA Journal, London, challenging the Taj Legend, to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and asked them to respond. I received no reply. In 1982 ASI published a small booklet named *Taj Museum*. The authors say on page 4/5

"The site selected for the burial was an extremely pleasant and lofty land situated to the south of the city **on which till then stood the mansion (Manzil) of Raja Mansingh** which was at that time in possession of the latter's grandson Raja Jaisingh."

*So, what happened to Raja Mansingh's palace?*

It is sensible, reasonable and logical to say that Raja Mansingh's Palace is now known as Taj Mahal.

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### **Disappearance of gold articles**

*Does the Badshahnama throw any light on the disappearance of gold and silver from Raja Mansingh's palace?*

Yes it does. Let us look carefully at what two Muslim authors have said.

\* In 1896, Syad Mohammad Latif wrote, " We are told in the Badshah Namah that, in 1042 A.H. (1632 A.D.), a fence or enclosure of solid gold studded with gems was placed around the Empress's sarcophagus. It was made under the directions of Bebadal Khan, the Superintendent of the Royal Kitchen (Khasa Sharifa), and was a perfect specimen of the art of Indian jewellery. It weighed forty thousand tolahs of pure gold and was valued at six lakhs of rupees. [so, the chef suddenly became a supervisor of goldsmiths!]....."

" In the year 1052 A.H. (1642 A D) the golden palisade above mentioned was removed, as it was feared that gold in such mass would exposed to the danger of theft by ill-disposed people, and in its stead the present net work of marble, previously referred to, was put up. This structure, which in elegance and beauty is a master-piece of sculpture, was according to the Badshah Nama, prepared in a period of ten years, at a cost of fifty thousand rupees."  
(*Agra, Historical and descriptive*, 1896, p115.)

\* In 1905, Maulana M Ahmad said, "The Badshahnama tells us that gold railing set in costly gems was prepared in 1632. It served as a protection to the tomb. It was made under the supervision of Bebadal Khan, Master of the King's kitchen...  
(*Badshahnama Vol II pp 325-326*)"  
*History of Taj*, 1905, pp 46/47

[This is wonderful! It implies four things :-

- 1 The golden rail appeared as soon as the coffin of Mumtaz was brought to Agra.**
- 2. It was in place for ten years, and all of a sudden there was fear of theft. So, it was removed. And yet historians tell us that Shahjahan's reign was golden and peaceful and he ruled like a father.**
- 3. Weight of the rail was said to be 40,000 tolas.  
One Tola is roughly 10 grammes. Therefore the rail must have weighed 400,000 grammes or 400 Kg. No thief could easily move such a huge piece.**
- 4 Preparation for the marble screen had started as soon as the golden palisade was fixed in place!]**

If we read between the lines, it would become clear to us that Shahjahan looted this huge golden rail as well as all other gold and silver articles from Taj Mahal. That is why he grabbed Raja Mansingh's palace under the pretext of burying Mumtaz.

*This episode reminds me of a landmark in London. Isn't there a Cenotaph [Empty tomb] in London?*

Yes there is a Cenotaph in the middle of main road called the Whitehall. After 1918, it was erected there in the memory of British and Commonwealth soldiers who died in World War I and now serves as a memorial to all soldiers, sailors and airmen who died in World War II and other conflicts.

*Does it have a handrail around it for protection?*

No.

*So, why would the cenotaph of Mumtaz need protection?*

Precisely. This just shows how we have accepted many such absurd explanations in the past, without question. Moreover, how strange it is that there was need for protection of the cenotaph, but NOT the so-called Real Graves!! There are no barriers around the so-called Real graves.

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**Why did Shahjahan come to Agra?**

There is yet another important question that has been sidelined. Why did Shahjahan come to Agra, six months after he sent there the coffin supposed to have contained the exhumed body of his wife? No one has asked the question and historians have been telling that Shahjahan came to Agra to start construction of Taj Mahal. Let us see.

Elliot and Dowson's '*History of India as Told by its Own Historians*', Volume VII dealing with the reign of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb, was published in 1877. They tell us -

p 31 " Return of the Court from Burhanpur to A'gra.  
[Text Badshahnama Volume i. p.421] The Emperor being tired of his residence at Burhanpur, resolved to return to the capital. So he set out

on 24th Ramzan,\* \* and arrived there on the 1st Zi-l-hijja, 1041 A.H."  
[Note – This was 12 June 1632, according to Mundy.]

**So, according to his own official chronicle, Shahjahan came to Agra simply because he got tired of staying in Burhanpur.**

*Has anybody else referred to this fact?*

There was only one person. See *Travels of Peter Mundy*, compiled by R C Temple, 1914, footnote on page 188.

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*The question now arises – what was Agra like when Shahjahan's wife died? Was it just a huge barren land with Knights and Noblemen owning pieces of land, as Historians would have us believe?*

The answer is NO. The western and southern bank of river Jumna (Yamuna) was full of **palaces** of the lords. [Note – In Agra, the river Jumna flows from North to South. After passing the Red Fort it turns towards the East. ] The details are contained in a Dutch document. We had to wait till 1925 when it was translated into English. But there were some indications before 1925, as noted below -

#### **Agra, the ancient Hindu city**

In 1909, Seventh edition of H G Keene's *Handbook for visitors to Agra* was rewritten and brought up to date by E A Duncan, C E, F G S. We find :-

pp 77/78 " THE STRAND...From the Fort downward to some distance beyond the Taj, the river Jumna once washed **massive ghats (landing and bathing places)** facing the stately palaces, elegant villas, and beautiful gardens of the great nobles; while farther inward were less pretentious middle-class houses, and the shops of flourishing traders, which Bernier, who saw them, describes as " a row of new houses with arcades resembling those of the principal streets in Delhi." ...The Strand ...then passes under the fine Jumna railway bridge, which has a total length of 2,427 feet, and was built in 1875.

" While the Strand was under construction (in 1838), from the part of it facing the Fort several fragments of a Jain temple were exhumed, which are believed to be of great antiquity. One of its black-basalt



columns is in the Museum at Lucknow, one stands at the meeting of the roads near the Taj, and two form the gate pillars of the General's house at Agra."

### **Palaces on the river bank**

In 1925, *Jehangir's India* by W H Moreland was published. The title is confusing. The book has nothing to do with Jehangir. It is just a translation of Pelsaert's *Remonstrantie* of 1626.

In the preface, Moreland tells us, " Pelsaert worked as a Senior Dutch Factor (Merchant) at Agra from 1620 to 1627. ...He had mastered the language of the country...His spellings of Indian names are remarkably accurate ...Remonstrantie was written in 1626 - basically a commercial report..."

[Note : The report in Dutch was never published. Moreland translated from the manuscript in Holland.]

Pelsaert describes Agra on pages 1 to 5. He says, "...The breadth of the city is by no means so great as the length, because everyone has tried to be close to the river bank and consequently the waterfront is occupied by the costly palaces of all the famous lords, which make it appear very gay and magnificent, and extend for a distance of 3 1/2 Holland miles [i.e.10 1/2 English miles]. I will record the chief of these palaces in order."

"Beginning from the north, there is the palace of Bahadur Khan who was formerly king of the fortress of Asir (5 kos from Burhanpur). Next is the palace of Raja Bhoj, father of the present Rai Ratan, Governor of Burhanpur (rank 5,000 horse). Then come Ibrahim Khan (3,000 horse), Rustam Kandahari (5,000 horse); Raja Kishan Das (3,000 horse); Itiqad Khan, the younger brother of Asaf Khan (5,000 horse); Shahzada Khanam sister of the present king, who was married to Muzaffar Khan (formerly King of Gujarat); Goulzier Begam, this king's mother; Khwaja Bansi, formerly steward of Sultan Khurram (1,000 horse), Wazir Khan (5,000 horse), Tzoaeghpoeera a large enclosure inhabited by the widows of the late King Akbar; the palaces of Ehtibar Khan the eunuch who was Governor of Agra city at his death; Baqar Khan (3,000 horse); Mirza Aboussagiet (1,500 horse); the exceedingly handsome and costly palace of Asaf Khan (8,000 horse) Itimad-ud-daula (5,000 horse); Khwaja Abdal Hasan (5,000 horse); Rochia Sultan Begam the present king's sister but unmarried."

"Then begins the Shahburj, or royal bastion of the Fort...."

"After passing the Fort there is *Nakhas*, a great market... beyond it lie the houses of some great lords, such as Mirza Abdulla, son of Khan Azam (3,000 horse); Aga Nur, provost of king's army (3,000 horse), Jahan Khan (2,000 horse); Mirza Khurram son of Khan Azam (2,000 horse) Mahabat Khan (8,000 horse); Khan Alam (5,000) horse); Raja Bet Singh (3,000 horse); **the late Raja Mansingh (5,000 horse)**, Raja Madho Singh (2,000 horse)."

" On the other side of the river is a city named Sikandra, well built and populated, but chiefly by banian merchants..."  
[ Number of horses indicate rank of the nobleman]

**Pelsaert's Report was prepared in 1626, five years before the lady (Mumtaz) died. Thus the 10 ½ mile stretch of the river bank was full of palaces. We have already seen a confession in Badshahnama that Shahjahan grabbed Raja Mansingh's Palace (which was one of the palaces listed by Pelsaert) for burying his wife Mumtaz. This is the truth unpalatable to the Historians. That is why they do not refer to this report, even though it was made available in English in 1925.**

They do not want to touch this aspect at all.

We have found reference to above book *Jehangir's India* by W H Moreland in only one book –

*The Great Mughals* by Bamber Gascoigne, 1971

But Gascoigne also does not want to know what Agra was like in 1626. He simply includes Moreland's above book in his bibliography at the back of his book.

[It seems that Sir R C temple who compiled *Mundy's Travels* in 1914 was aware of Pelsaert and does refer to him in his footnotes and includes him in the bibliography. Alas, he too does not want to know the palaces on the river bank.]

THAT IS CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE.

*But why?*

Well, the 10 ½ mile stretch of river bank in Agra was full of palaces, Raja Mansingh's palace being the last but one. Shahjahan's official chronicle *Badshahnama* clearly confesses that Shahjahan grabbed that Raja Mansingh's palace for burial of his wife Mumtaz. That is the truth the historians do not wish to accept. So, they simply ignore Pelsaert's report even though it was translated into English in 1925.

Strange enough, above description of Agra is tallied by records of Akbar's times.

"Agra is a large city and possesses a healthy climate. The river Jumna flows through it for five *kos*, (i.e. 10 miles) and on either bank are delightful villas and pleasant stretches of meadow. "

[*Ain-e-Akbari*, part II, Translated by Prof H F Blochman & H S Jarrett, 1897, p180]

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Did any one else notice these palaces mentioned by Pelsaert?

Some did, unknowingly. Bernier, the French Doctor who stayed at Aurangzeb's court for seven years (1658-65) did notice them when he visited Taj. He says that there is a huge terrace (4 ft above the garden level). While standing on this terrace, if you look up stream on the river Yamuna (Jumna) and then, "From this terrace are seen the Jumna flowing below a large expanse of luxuriant gardens - a part of the city of Agra - the fortress - and **all the fine residences of the omrahs erected on the banks of the river.**"

[Ref - *Travels in the Mughal Empire* - F Bernier, 1826, p340. The earliest English translation was in 1671.]

Many authors have referred to Bernier. For example, Keene - *Handbook to Agra*, 1888, pp29/30.

Due to various reasons, the palaces had become disused. Many were demolished during the famine works of 1838 when the Strand Road was constructed. The visitors therefore noticed ruins of former palaces, as recorded, for example in -

\* 1845 - *Travels in India* by a German Captain Leopold von Orlich, p45

\* 1859 - *A Visit to India, China and Japan* by Bayard Taylor, p69

The palaces named above were also mentioned by others. Let us examine them in the year order.

1872

Palace of Raja Bhoj, mentioned by Pelsaert was in existence in 1872. Archaeological Survey of India Report for the Year 1871-72 was prepared by M/s Beglar (on Delhi) and Carllyle (on Agra) In volume II Mr Carllyle tells us :-

p 4 " ... Again as bearing on the other side of the argument I have now to mention that, on the right bank of the river about three miles above the fort, there is the site of an ancient garden palace called the **garden and palace of Raja Bhoj!** Certain intelligent educated Hindus in Agra say that it is traditionally held to have been a palace of Raja Bhoj of Malwa of the fifth to sixth century; but at any rate **all agree as to the fact that this garden palace of Raja Bhoj was in existence previous to the Muhammadan conquest of this part of the country.** I am, however, inclined to think that the Raja Bhoj who built this garden palace at Agra may have been the Bhoja, the successor of Guhila or Sri Gohadit of Gelhote dynasty of Mewar....."

(We are not concerned with who Raja Bhoj was)

1874

In 1874, Keene's *Handbook to Agra* (revised edition) was published. On pages 14 and 15, he describes Agra City of 1630 [i.e. before the death of Mumtaz] as given in De Laet Joanne's book *Empire of the Great Moghul*, in Latin published in 1631. He says,

"...everyone has been anxious to have immediate access to the river and all have consequently built their houses on the bank.....On leaving the royal citadel, [i.e. Red Fort] one emerges on a large market, where horses, camels, oxen, and all kinds of merchandise are sold..... Then follow the palaces of Mirza Abdulla, Aga Nours, Zehenna Chan, Mirza Chrom, Mahabot Khan, Chan Alem, Radzia Bartzing, **Radzia Mantzing.**"

\* Pelsaert was a Senior Dutch Factor who was stationed at Agra during 1620 –27. His report was used by De Laet Joannes, Director of Dutch East India Company in Holland, in his book in Latin – *De Imperio Magni Mogolis* in 1631.

1896

A list of palaces is contained in *Badshahnama* itself (published in 1867). Latif tells us in his work of 1896, "The space between the fort and the Taj was once studded with villas of the nobility, the stately edifices and superb palaces and garden houses of the Omerahs of the Moghal Empire; but nothing now remains of them except huge mounds and shapeless masses of earth. Bernier, who saw these buildings describes them as " row of new houses with arcades resembling those of the principal streets in Delhi." **They have been also noticed by contemporary historians, Mulla Abdul Lahori, author of *Badshah Nama* and Mohammad Saleh, author of *Amal-i-Saleh*.**" (Ref – *Agra Historical and Descriptive, 1896, p100*)  
It does need someone who can read Persian to supply further details.

1905

Agra District Gazetteer gives some information.  
It describes Agra City on page 213

"There were extensive bazars and houses of masonry, while beyond on either side were the gardens and palaces of the nobles. When the strand road was in course of construction, old houses and foundations, sometimes as much as ten feet thick, were encountered and had to be removed by gunpowder. Some of these old buildings are known by name. Among them were the **palace of Asaf Khan**, father of Mumtaz Mahal, standing in front of the fort till its destruction at the time of the mutiny, (1857) when the glacis was cleared; the haveli of Rumi Khan, a red sandstone palace with a wall terminating towards the river in two domed towers half a mile below the fort on the right hand side of the road, and built by one Husain Khan of Basrah, who rose high in the service of Jahangir; the Shish Mahal or Deorhi Sahibji, a considerable ruin by the water's edge; the palaces of Todar Mal and **Mahabat Khan** in the same neighbourhood; the dargah of Jalal-ud-din Bukhari, who died in 1057 A.H during the reign of Shah Jahan, close to the burning ghat; and beyond the latter, extending to the walls of the Taj, a large building, demolished a few years ago, in a garden known as the Bagh Khan-i-Alam and used as a nursery for plants."

1914

\* Peter Mundy, Factor of (English) East India Company, during his stay in Agra during 1631-33 had noted –  
pp 207/9 " Agra is scituated on the River Jemina [Jamna]; The Castle

and great mens howses on th' one side, as [ those of ] Asaph Ckaun [Asaf Khan], Mohabutt Ckaum [Mahabat Khan], etc. great Amrawes [umra], and their Gardens (which are many and faire) on th' other side, yieldinge a most delectable prospecte..The Cittie hath many outstraglinge places, such as Pores [pur - suburb], Bazares, Gunjes [ganj]- market], Soe that I think to encompassse all would take att least 14 or 15 miles."

Thus he does mention palaces of **Asaf Khan** and **Mahabat Khan** and adds that there were many palaces and gardens of Umraos (Lords).

[In a footnote on page 207, R C Temple who compiled Mundy's Travels, says - Asaf Khan's was blown up in 1857-1858. The large walled garden of Mahabat Khan still exists]

1924

Maulvi Moin-ud-din Ahmad revised his 1905 book and gave it the title *The Taj and its environments*. On page 15, we find some interesting information. He says,

"Half a mile off from the Fort, there was on the right side of the Strand road, Roomi Khan's dwelling close to the Bukhara ghat. On the left side along the river bank, houses and gardens were to be seen in an unbroken line from the Fort to the Taj. Among them was the block, a crystal palace, called Sahibji's Deorhi. A little way on, **there stood Mahabat Khan's residence**, beyond which lay the shrine of Saiyad Jalal Uddin Bukhari, which exists still. **Near the Burning Ghat were the mansions of Raja Todar Mal, Raja Man Singh and Raja Jai Singh, now effaced forever.**"

Maulvi Ahmad worked as a Superintendent in the Collector's office at Agra. He does mention Mahabat Khan's palace. How did he know that the palace of Raja Mansingh has been effaced forever?

1928

In a Dutch book we found, the palaces mentioned again

XXIII Death of Akbar and Accession of Jahangir (Oct. 1605)

"The chief Ommeran who were present at the King's death bed. shut all the gates of the fortress of Agra as soon as he was dead, and set a faithful officer to guard each of them. **Then the following assembled in the palace of Khan Azam for urgent deliberation** - Murtaza

Khan, Saiyed Khan, Qulich Muhammad Khan, Raja Ram Das and Raja Mansjng. .... Murtaza Khan went to prince Salim and congratulated him on attaining the dignity of kingship. This example was followed by Nabab Tzaeyeil-chan and his relative Coulie Marnet-chan and soon afterwards Khan Azam joined them. **However Raja Mansingh conducted Sultan Khusru to his own (i.e. Mansingh's) palace through the gate which opens on the river, whither he was brought in a boat.** Selim(i.e. Jahangir) being now supported by the chief Ommerau, entered the fort and conveyed the body of his father on foot outside the fort, accompanied by his Ommerau. "

Ref - *The Empire of the Great Mogols* - by De Laet Joanne, 1631  
Translated by J S. Hoyland,  
Publisher D B Taraporewala & Co. Bombay, 1928.  
pp 170,171,172

Thus, Pelsaert's list of palaces is confirmed by other sources. One of them (last but one) was Late Raja Mansingh's palace. It was grabbed by Shahjahan for burial of his wife Mumtaz. Shahjahan stripped that palace of all its gold and silver. This led to serious leaks all over the buildings.

-----  
**Leaking Taj Mahal**

It may sound strange but a letter of 1652 from Prince Aurangzeb to His father Shahjahan exists. In 1946, it was translated by Archaeological Survey of India. Mr M S Vats, their Superintendent tells us -

" The earliest record of its repairs is available in a letter dated 1652 A D from Prince Aurangzeb to his imperial father, Shah Jahan, wherein he points out defects in the dome and vaults of the mausoleum, saying,

" the dome of the holy tomb leaked in two places towards the north during the rainy season and so also the fair semi-domed arches, many of the galleries on the second storey, the four smaller domes, the four northern compartments and the seven arched underground chambers which have developed cracks"

"During the rains last year the terrace over the main dome also leaked in two or three places. It has been repaired but it remains to be seen during the ensuing rainy season how far the operations have proved successful."

"The domes of the Mosque and Jama'at Khana leaked during the rains

and were made watertight. The master builders are of the opinion that if the roof of the second storey is re-opened and dismantled and treated afresh with concrete over which half a yard of mortar grout is laid, the semi-domed arches, the galleries and the smaller domes will probably become watertight, but they say that they are unable to suggest any measures of repairs to the main dome..." [Ancient India, 1946, pp 4-7]

*This letter indicates that Taj Mahal was leaking all over the place. Is not 1652 the very year when Taj Mahal is generally said to have been completed?*

Yes.

*Then Aurangzeb must have been furious with the Master Architect Ustad Isa and his master builders/ masons. What punishment did he mete out to them for such shoddy workmanship?*

Absolutely nothing. He does not mention Ustad Isa at all. On the other hand, he pleads that his father should pay attention to more permanent repairs.

*Why?*

The obvious reason must be that Shahjahan had plundered all the gold and silver articles in Taj Mahal involving extensive vandalism. This resulted in neglect of maintenance and had caused severe damage also. Ustad Isa and others, though branded as architects and master builders were merely ordinary labourers. They could hardly be blamed for leakages in the ancient buildings.

I (author) have personally witnessed the damage to existing buildings caused while modifying some London Underground Railway stations.

*Where do we find the Persian text of Aurangzeb's letter?*

It was published in Muraqqa-I-Akabarabadi edited by Said Ahmad of Agra in 1931 (page 43, footnote 2)

*Have historians taken any notice of this letter?*

No. The recently published works are –



\* *Splendours of the East* by Sir Mortimer Wheeler  
(G Weidenfield and Nicolson, London 1965)

\* *Great Mughals* by Bamber Gascoigne  
(Jonathan Cape, London 1971)

\* *India discovered* by John Keay  
(Windward publication, London 1981)

None of these give even a hint of such a letter. However, a clue to the Archaeological Survey of India report of 1946 was given in 1973 in the book *The Peacock Throne* by Waldemar Hansen (page 181)

*May be the British attitude has not changed. But what about other historians?*

They too have not taken any notice of Aurangzeb's letter!

*Why?*

We are all afraid of losing face. Historians are no exception. They do not have the courage to admit that they have been fooled all along. With this knowledge, let us now turn to the structure itself.

-----  
**Ground plan of Taj Mahal**

It is strange that there is no official plan of Taj Mahal complex which, covers 3,000 ft (north- south) by 1,000 ft. Out of the blue, in 1909 a partial plan appeared in H G Keene's *Handbook to Agra*

*What do we find in it?*

On the south, in the centre, there is a gateway called Shree Darwaza. This name is used even by Muslim authors.

*But that name implies that a small statue of Lord Ganesh would be found in a recess above the door. What do we see?*

The recess for Lord Ganesh is there, but his small statue has been thrown out.

*\* What else?*

There are two buildings, both two storied, one in the East wall, and one in the West wall. These are called Nakkar (Nagar) Khanas. Nagarkhanas are - Music galleries. They are an integral part of Hindu Palace / temple. If we go to the famous Ambabai Temple in Kolhapur, we see a Nagarkhaha as a part of the temple. It is quite normal to play instrumental music in the mornings and evenings. Many times music is played on Shahanai and Chaughada. Nagara means Drums. Drums are beaten by the devotees at the time of worship / prayers.

*What are the Nagarkhanas doing in a tomb?*

They clearly indicate that originally Taj Mahal was a Hindu structure.

*\* Anything else?*

In the South East corner, we find a Gaushala – cow stable. The terms Gaushala and Gaushala Burj are found in the records of Archaeological Survey of India Reports. (see report for the year 1900) A cow stable has nothing to do with a mausoleum. But it is quite common to find them in the precincts of Hindu Temples or Palaces.

\* There is also a Baoli Burj. It is quite common to have such wells in North India. They have rooms at several levels. These are quite comfortable during hot summer days. Once again they are not compatible with Mausoleum, but are quite appropriate for a Hindu palace or a temple.



Ground Plan of Taj Mahal

**Hidden basements and basement rooms**

*But what about the tombs of Mumtaz and Shahjahan?*

Tombs can be planted on any building, even on Buckingham Palace. We all know that the tombs in the Cenotaph chamber are fakes. But even the so called 'Real Graves' in the chamber below are fakes.

*How?*

The deception is caused by geometry. Let us see, how -  
From garden level we climb steps to come to a huge, red sandstone terrace 4 ft higher.

We then climb 22 steps in the Marble plinth 19ft high. After 4 more steps we come to another plinth (3ft), after climbing another 2 steps (1ft) we enter the Cenotaph chamber. We have thus climbed 27 feet. We then go down 21 steps (16ft) to see the so called 'Real Graves'. We are therefore 11 ft above the garden level. Unfortunately no one counts the number of steps and we just get carried away by what the Tourist Guides tell us. We should remember that there are at least two stories below the so called 'Real Grave' chamber.

*Why don't we see them?*

We can. From the Cenotaph Chamber we need to come down on the main terrace. If we walk to the riverside, stand by the railing and look down we do see these stories. The best way to see them is to get out of Taj Mahal, walk to the riverside and then look up.

Some authors have provided more details as below -

1855

*Illustrated Handbook of Architecture etc* by James Fergusson was published. On page 437 he does provide a cross-section (drawn to scale) through the central edifice and show the two basements. He did not say how he got cross-section and after Fergusson, no one even mentions it!!

1901

*Murray's Handbook for Travellers to India* was edited by J Burgess, former Director General of Archaeological Survey of India. He does re-produce the above cross-section, but removes the second basement. However, it is still clear that there is a basement around the 'so called' Real Graves chamber.

1950

*History of Architecture* by Sir Bannister Fletcher was published. He tampers with the above cross-section further and creates an impression that there is nothing around the 'so called' Real Graves.

**Now, that is deliberately misleading lay public.**

In 1901, J Burgess repeats cross-section by Fergusson but deletes one basement floor completely

In 1950, Sir Bannister Fletcher goes further and creates an impression that there is nothing around the so called 'real grave chamber' Moreover, in the Main terrace, behind the central edifice, we see two staircase openings nearly 350 ft apart. The steps take us to some 17 ft below the so called 'real grave' chamber level. At the foot of the staircase runs a 5 ft 8 inch wide corridor 300 ft long east-west. On the riverside of this corridor we find 21 rooms varying in size from 11ft by 20ft to 22ft by 20ft. On the other side of this corridor and at either end of it, are two blocked up doorways and these lead to two corridors 300 ft apart and running north-south. There is also a central blocked up doorway, which leads to the chamber under the real grave chamber.

There are similar rooms under the so called Mosque and so called Jawab but entrances to them from the corridor are blocked up.

Yet another storey below is completely unexplored.

*Is there any more information on the hidden rooms?*

Yes there is. On 9 April 1972 Mr Hari Indersingh Kanwar was invited by Mr W H Siddiqui, deputy Superintending Archaeologist of Agra to witness some explorations in Taj Mahal. Mr Kanwar reported, ".... A little distance away there was evidence of another excavation. We observed the exposed portion of the wall and from the manner in which the red sandstone slabs had been arranged, it gave the appearance of a sort of entrance for entry into interior lying further South (i.e. to the chamber under the so called real grave chamber.) .....However from what one can make of the two excavations stated above it would appear that there were doors or points of entry in the southern perimeter of corridor, (i.e. there are two corridors 300 ft. apart and running north-south. But the entrances to them are blocked up)."

Ref - *Subterranean Chambers of Taj Mahal*, article in the Magazine Islamic Culture, published from Hyderabad, India, July 1974 issue, pp 173-175

Reader would understand that Archaeological Survey of India would not, of course, invite persons like me or Mr Oak to be present during their excavations.

In the above article, Mr Kanwar agrees that there are more Basement

rooms on the riverside which are still blocked up and says, " Let the arched gallery be exposed by opening the line of arches along the riverside wall and it would immediately enhance the charm and beauty of the Taj Mahal."

*Were these staircase openings and the 21 rooms always open?*

NO. The 1902 Annual Report of the N W Provinces Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India contains a plan of the Taj Mahal. But it does not show these openings. The rooms are however mentioned in the Urdu edition of the *History of the Taj* by Moin-ud-din Ahmad in 1904. Thus these openings were discovered in or around 1903. Shahjahan had sealed them with slabs matching with the terrace pavement.

*Then surely there must be some record of the discovery. After all the British Rulers were well known for keeping meticulous records.*

There is absolutely nothing in the Annual Reports (or any other reports) of the Archaeological Survey of India. And every British author has been silent on this discover ever since. The only exception is *Keene's Handbook for visitors to Agra*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition re-written by E A Duncan and published in 1909.

*What does he say?*

On page 177 he says, "THE BASEMENT ROOMS are centrally situated as a line of fourteen rooms along the river-face of the Great Basement, under its terrace; and each of them is connected by a doorway with an inner lobby running East and West along their entire length. From each end of the lobby a staircase ascends to the terrace of the Great Basement, where its entrance, closed by red sandstone slab, lay unsuspected, until discovered a few years ago, *the clue being given by a small window overlooking the river in each of the two easternmost rooms*. Each entrance is now guarded by a low lattice rail of red sandstone. The rooms once frescoed and otherwise decorated, being now in darkness and infested by bats, cannot be explored without a torch or lamp. Whether they originally opened on to a ghat and gave admittance to the Taj from the river; or being provided with windows, were used as cool resorts during the heat of the day, cannot now be



decided. If the former, they may possibly have at some time been inundated by a high flood in the river; and this threatened danger to the foundations of the Tomb, may have led to their being closed up. The presence of sand on their floors somewhat favours this view. The Jumna has often inundated the riverside rooms at Itimad-ud-daula."

[Notes : There is a platform 3 ft 6 inch wide running along the river front. It is 17 ft below the floor level of the Basement rooms. From time to time, it lies hidden under river deposits. It was seen in 1825, then went under the deposits, was exposed in 1934 and was visible as late as 1964 but lies hidden under the deposits again today. There are steps from it to the river level. Water would need to rise by 25 feet to flood these rooms. Did it ever rise so much? Moreover, there are rooms in the North East and North West towers which are 17 ft lower than above rooms. They were not shut. So, Keene's assumption seems to be wrong.]

\* The English East India Company captured Agra from Maharaja Shinde of Gwalior in 1803. Why did it take them 100 years to realise that there are basement rooms? ]

*But what could be the purpose of these Basement Rooms?*

Maulavi Moin-ud-din Ahmad is baffled. He confesses, "The real object of building them remains a mystery." (*History of Taj*, 1905, pp 35-36.)

We find no explanation in Keene's book of 1909 either.

Some 60 years later, Mr Kanwar tells us, ". when this writer discussed the matter with persons who professed to know the manner in which these underground rooms could have been utilised I was told that some of these chambers might have been used for storing provisions and refreshments to be served during the Emperor's visits. Other rooms were probably used for temporary storage of equipment-such as utensils to warm the provisions, and tents and shamianas, and it is possible that this series of curious chambers provided an opportunity for indulging in hide and seek games - an interesting pastime with some of the rulers."

*Ref - Subterranean Chambers of Taj Mahal*, an article published in Islamic Culture July 1974 issue, published from Hyderabad (India),

p168.

Mr Kanwar conveniently forgets that there are 15 rooms in the marble plinth, just 4 ft above garden level. These are available for storage. Moreover, the Red Fort, the place of Royal residence is only a mile away.

Authors have to resort to such absurd explanations because these rooms were not a part of mausoleum, but of a Hindu Temple / Palace grabbed by Shahjahan, and therefore these are all 'hush-hush' for the Archaeological Survey of India.

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There is yet another mystery.

*What?*

If we look very carefully at the cross-section of Taj Mahal provided by Fergusson in 1855 we do find these rooms!!

**No survey of Taj Mahal by Archaeological Survey of India**

*What you say is rather odd. The discovery of the Basement Rooms should have made the British Archaeologists more inquisitive. What could have prevented them from further exploring?*

Elementary, my friend! How could any one explain the basements below the so called Mosque and a storey above it? And once the ball starts to roll, how could the opening up of basements under the so called 'Real Grave' chamber be stopped? What would have happened if they were to discover that Taj Mahal is not a tomb?

*So what?*

The British authorities were actively upholding all unreasonable demands of Muslims against the Hindus ever since the Great War of Independence of 1857-59 (Archaeological Survey of India was established in 1861). Let us look at the chronology of events –

Year	Date	Event
1901		Lord Curzon, the Viceroy detached some districts from Punjab and created a new separate Muslim majority province of North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

1903	7 December	Lord Curzon, declares his intention to partition Bengal to create a Muslim majority province of East Bengal.
1905	16 October	Lord Curzon puts into effect the partition of Bengal
1906	1 October  30 December	Agakhan's infamous petition to Lord Minto the new Viceroy, pleading that Muslims should be treated as separate from Hindus. Muslim League was started in Dacca.
1909		Morley Minto reforms – separate electorates were granted to Muslims.
1910		ASI divided its various "circles" (i.e. divisions) into two sections -:  (1) Muhammadan and British Monuments (2) Hindu and Buddhist Monuments  Thus, Muslims were made equal to British!
1935		Sindh was separated from Bombay province, thus creating another Muslim majority province
1947	15 August	India was partitioned and granted independence

The reason for the British not carrying out any further exploration of the Taj Mahal, is obvious enough.

*Didn't the British undertake any survey of the Taj Mahal then?*

Let us see.

### **Survey of Taj Mahal**

One Col Hodgson of the Bengal Army did take some measurements in 1825. But this was merely accidental. He simply wanted to establish the relationship between the Indian guz (measure of length) and the British Yard for the purposes of land survey. He published his findings in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland (Volume 7, 1843)

When Hodgson came to the Taj Mahal, the attendant there said that he had in his possession a Persian Manuscript which gave various dimensions of the structure. When Hodgson checked them, he got very inconsistent results. He says in his report, "... **The document in the possession of the attendant is evidently the fabrication of an impostor.**" (p50)

*If Shahjahan really built the Taj Mahal, why should there be any need to fabricate such a manuscript?*

Survey of Taj Mahal by Col Hodgson

In Appendix 'C', Hodgson describes the Taj Mahal and says,

" It must be remembered that this is not a temple but a tomb. "

*When no one had expressed any doubts about the true nature of the Taj Mahal, in 1843, why did he have to assert that it was not a temple but a tomb? Had he come to know some details or information himself which he deliberately withheld mentioning to maintain the current*

*legend?*

Yes. That is quite possible. In appendix C Hodgson produces extracts from the Shahjahan Nama, but there is no mention of Mumtaz or her tomb or the Taj Mahal!

Also, Hodgson produces a plan of the Taj Mahal (p42) but does not say who carried out the survey.

*What does the plan show?*

Hodgson names the various buildings as mentioned in Shahjahan Nama by Muhammad Salah Kumbo, but the tombs of Satiunnisa Khanum (in the south-east corner) and Sarhani Begum (in the south-west corner) are not shown in the plan.

The area (1000 ft by 430ft) between Taj Ganj Gate and the Great Entrance Gate is called Jilo khana (pleasure house).

The building on east side of central edifice is called mehmankhana (guest house).

There is also a Baoli Burj 80 ft south of the so called Mosque. The name Baoli clearly implies a deep well with several rooms at several floor levels.

There is a platform about four ft wide running from north-east tower to north-west tower (i.e. along the river front). There are two flights of 15 steps from this platform on to the river.  
All these structures are highly irrelevant in and around a tomb.

*What happened to the platform?*

It lay hidden under the heaps of silt and debris accumulated over the years. It was discovered during some repairs undertaken in 1936-37. Khan Bahadur Maulavi Zafar Hasan of Archaeological Survey of India tells us,

" Another interesting feature revealed in the river-side wall is a platform at the plinth level projecting 3 ft 6 inches beyond it, and running further to the east as far as the mihrab projection of the Jawab. This was

hidden under the heaps of silt and debris, the accumulation of ages, until it was incidentally brought to notice this year, in the course of **repairs to the foundation wells under the north-west bastion.** (Plate I, a)“

“.....**A few stone rings built into the masonry under the platform apparently for mooring of boats have also been discovered. ”**

“It may be safely concluded that the platform was intended as a landing stage and this view receives support from the remains of an old ghat where boats used to be kept. ”

**“A staircase in each of the north-east and north-west bastions gives access to the river,** and the indications detailed above together with the profuse decoration of the river-side wall tend to show that boating in the Jumna had been in view when the Taj was designed, that provision for it was made in the scheme and that it was a favourite pastime of the Mughal Emperors...”

Ref – *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India* , 1936-37, pp 3/4

[Note : What Maulavi Hasan says above is yet another indication that Taj Mahal is a temple-palace. No one would go for boating next to the burial place of one's beloved person. There are temple-cum-recreation centres. To quote an example, the famous spot Saras Bagh in Pune (Poona) was maintained as a lake where the Maratha Peshwas used to go for boating. There is a temple of Shree Ganesh in the lake. The temple is still there, but the lake has dried up. The temple is still known as *Talyatala Ganapati* (Ganesh temple inside a lake). Area of lake is 20,000 sq ft and the area of temple is 2,000 sq ft. Hindus have built many temples on the river banks, where boating is quite appropriate.]

*What happened to the above platform after 1936-37?*

Once again it lies hidden under the heaps of silt and debris. But part of it can still be seen around the north-east corner, including stone rings for anchoring boats. The whole platform was seen as late as 1960-61



Stones for anchoring boats

**Hidden Rooms in 'so called' Mosque and Jawab**

*Going back to Col Hodgson's paper of 1843, he calls the building on the east of the central edifice – Mehmankhana, a guest house. Didn't the British use the building as such?*

Yes. They did. This fact was noted by the following visitors

Col Hodgson,	1825
Fanny Parks,	1835
Col Sleeman,	1836
H G Keene,	1874

*Then where did they stay?*

Good question. We find confession to that effect in 1874. In his *Handbook for visitors to Agra*, Keene says, p 39 " The false Mosque is as fine as the true. It is appropriated to the use of travellers and parties of pleasure "

What the tourists see of this building is an open hall with wall on east side only. The guests must be staying either in the storey above or in the storeys below. Floor area at each level is 190ft by 80ft. All these rooms are now locked up or are blocked.

*When was renting of the rooms stopped?*

It was stopped by 1905 according to Agra District Gazetteer.

*Are there similar rooms in the Mosque as well?*

Yes. The building on the West of the central edifice – called Mosque, is identical with Mehmankhana. And the stories in it too are similarly blocked or locked up. These rooms can be clearly seen in the sketch of Capt R Elliot published in 1861. There can be no doubt that the British officers sealed these storeys.

### **Cross-section of Taj Mahal**

*Col Hodgson's paper of 1843 contains a plan of Taj Mahal. Has any one drawn a cross-section?*

Yes. As we have already mentioned, Fergusson produced the north-south cross section of the central edifice in 1855.

*But the Archaeological Survey of India was not started till 1861. How did Ferguson obtain the cross-section?*

Neither Fergusson nor any one else has answered this simple question!

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### **What did ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA do?**

*Who was in charge of the Archaeological Survey of India?*

General Cunningham was the Archaeological Surveyor in 1861, Director during 1862-65, and Director General during 1871-1885; the department was suspended during 1865-70. One would have thought that an extensive archaeological survey of Taj Mahal would have been his first priority; but the facts are otherwise.

*How?*

Cunningham never surveyed Taj Mahal; he did not even visit this monument!

*Really?*

Yes.

*Do we find any interesting information in the annual reports of Archaeological Survey of India?*

Yes. We do. The report for 1871-72 was prepared by M/s Beglar (on Delhi) and Carlleyle (on Agra). On page 67 of Volume II Carlleyle tells us –

**Taj Mahal**

“General Cunningham informed me that he had already in his possession a complete ground plan and sections and all measurements and particulars of this building.”

*There you are!*

Not quite. Though Cunningham remained in charge of ASI for further 14 years, he never published the said plan and sections. In all his publications he does not even mention Taj Mahal. Let alone any survey of it.

*But why?*

It must be for political reasons. Way back in 1842, when he was a Lieutenant in Bengal Engineers, Cunningham wrote to Col Sykes, one of the Directors of the East India Company, " ..... (such explorations) would be an undertaking of vast importance to the Indian Government politically, and to the British public. .... **Facts which prove that the establishment of the Christian religion in India must ultimately succeed. ....**"

[Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Volume VII of 1843. The letter was written at Aligarh on 15 September 1842 and read at the society on 3 December 1842.]

Abu Imam, a Pakistani historian comments,

**"Buddhism and its archaeology was therefore to be studied for the cause of promoting Christianity."**

[*Alexander Cunningham and Indian Archaeology* by Abu Imam, 1966,

pp40-41]

So, politics and archaeology go hand in hand. Cunningham also seems to have instructed his successors to keep quiet about Taj Mahal.

*Really?*

The facts speak for themselves. 20 years passed after Carlylle's report (see above). In the 1891 Annual Report of the North-West Provinces Circle, we find

" ... **Taj Mahal – as yet un-surveyed...."**

*Unbelievable!*

\* Another 9 years passed. In the Annual Report of the same circle (year 1900) we find a plan of Taj Mahal prepared by two Executive Engineers M/s Joseph and Lall. But this is no different from the 1825 map of Col Hodgson. There are no cross-sections. In the report we find –

Gaushala Burj – 376 ft of marble bordering was renewed.

Gaushala – This building was in a very dilapidated and dangerous condition.

Note – Gaushala is a Sanskrit word for a large cow stable.

\* In the Annual Report of 1902 of the United Provinces Circle, we again find a plan of Taj Mahal prepared by Executive Engineer Polwhele. Once again it is no different from the 1825 plan of Col Hodgson. And again there are no cross-sections!

\* In 1885 Cunningham retired. He was succeeded by J Burgess (1885-89)

Sir John Marshall was the Director General of ASI during 1902 to 1931. Sir Mortimer Wheeler was the last British Director General of ASI (1944-48). They all ensured that *Archaeological survey* of Taj Mahal was NOT done.

\* In 1915, Vincent Smith, former ICS officer admitted – **No official survey is available.** In another footnote, he says, "The Archaeological Survey of India, since its reorganisation, has not had time to study the

Taj buildings, except for conservation purposes. The report by Mr Carlylle on the minor remains at and near Agra in A.S.R. vol iv, 1874, is almost worthless."

(Ref – *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*, edited by V A Smith, 1915, p137, footnote on p358)

*Was there a gag on employees of the ASI?*

Yes there was. "In 1885 the ASI was reorganised. The surveyors were now forbidden by Government order to indulge in arguments and speculations based on the spelling of names and similar considerations as to the identity of persons, palaces, tribes etc. "

[Resolution No. 2-87-103 dated 6th June 1885 Governor General in Council. Quoted in the proceedings of the sub-committee, Public Service Commission of 1887, page 29.

Ref : *Alexander Cunningham and Indian Archaeology* by Abu Iman, 1966, page 207 ]

In other words, if the big chief says, "...A Hindu temple was destroyed and a grand mosque built on the same site, using the same materials and following the same Hindu construction as before, the surveyors must say, " Yes Sir! " They must not ask " Why should Muslims do such a stupid thing and not just throw away the idol and use the temple as a mosque?"

In this connection we should note that Sir Sayyad Ahmad, founder of the Aligad movement had stated that Outb Minar is a Hindu structure, but Sir Alexander Cunningham overruled and said that it was an Islamic structure. This how far gagging of ASI employees went.

It is interesting to note that Adinath Mosque, Sita ki Rasoi, Atla Devi Mosque and Vijay Mandir Mosque are all officially part of Islamic Architecture.

*Did any other travellers produce any maps or plans, which add to our knowledge?*

Yes. The plan in Daniell's book of 1801 is far more detailed than any of the above plans.

*Who were the Daniells?*

Thomas Daniell and his nephew William Daniell were painters. They were invited to visit India by the (English) East India Company. They stayed in India during 1786-1794. After returning to England, they published their sketches in *Oriental Scenery*. In 1801, they published a book entitled *Views of the Taje Mahal at the city of Agra in Hindoostan taken in 1789*. It contains two good views and plan of Taj Mahal.

*Who prepared the plan?*

It is difficult to say. Daniells stayed at Taj Mahal for only 2 days. They did not have time, energy, resources or training for preparing such a detailed map, drawn to guz scale (1 7/12 inches to 100 guz or R.F 1/2182). It has some interesting details.

*Such as?*

### **Bogus tombs**

In place of the tomb of Satiunnisa Khanum (south-west corner), we find the tomb of Futtehpuree and in the place of tomb of Sarhani Begum (south-east corner), we see tomb of Akbarabadee.

[Strange enough, Fanny Parks who visited Taj Mahal in 1835 also mentions tombs of Fatehpuree and Akbarabadee]

*May be Satiunnisa Khanum was known as Futtehpuree, and Sarhani Begum was known as Akbarabadee.*

Such a suggestion is absurd. A well-known historian tells us, " ... Akbar made it a rule that the concubines of Mughal Emperors should be named after the places of their or the towns in which they were admitted to the harem. (Waris, *Padshshnama*, p456). Hence we have ladies surnamed Akbarabadi, Fatehpuri, Aurangabadi, Zainabadi and Udaipuri. ..."

[*Anecdotes of Aurangzeb and other Historical Essays*, by Jadunath Sarkar, 1912, p 46]

And still on pages 151-156 Sarkar ascribes the tomb in the south-west corner to Satiunnisa Khanum

*How can he do this without any proof?*

Well, he did it and the British knighted him (He became a Sir)

*And the same applies to tomb of Sarhani Begum?*

Yes.

*And when Col Hodgson surveyed Taj Mahal in 1825 he did not find the mention of tombs of Futtehporee and Akbarabadee in Shahjahanama of Muhammad Salah Kumbo?*

That is right. He did not! The tombs themselves are nameless. We must now ask ourselves, "Are these tombs even real?" They are 12 ft above ground, have kitchens attached to them and sit on high octagonal plinths! Moreover the tomb of Maid has more decorations than that of the Queen.

*Do historians conceal this fact?*

\* They certainly do. E B Havell, late principal of School of Art, Calcutta, does not mention them in his *Handbook of Agra* (1904).

\* Encyclopaedia Britannica has not mentioned them for the last 150 years.

*What other intriguing details do we find in the above map?*

About 150 ft north of either side of the above tombs, we see apartments for female attendants to the 'Ladies of Rank ', and surrounding them are several Pawn bazaars. The walls of Taj extend to 1,000 ft south and enclose a huge market place extending over 23 acres. There are markets for silks and scented oils.

*Do we find similar maps in any other contemporary books?*

I have not found them yet, but they did exist.

*How do you know that?*

Thomas Twining, an employee of the (English ) East India Company visited Taj Mahal, Agra and Delhi in 1794. Twining left Delhi on 6 December 1794. On his return journey he tells us, p 256 "..... I purchased also an accurate map of Delhi, neatly delineated with red

and black lines on fine paper of a yellow hue. I Already possessed a similar one of Agra and another of the Taje (Taj Mahal)....."

[Ref: *Travels in India a Hundred Years Ago* by Thomas Twining, published in 1893 by J R Osgood, Mcilvaine and Co of London.]

[Note : If a chance visitor could go to a local market in Agra and buy an accurate map of Taj Mahal in 1794, surely there must be many more copies. But even the India Office Library and the British Museum Library do not have any copies. As Twining was Governor of Bihar (1802-1805) it will be most surprising if copies of this map are not found. ]

## **PLANNING AND LAYOUT**

*What you say is very interesting, but is it not possible that Shahjahan destroyed Raja Mansingh's palace and built Taj Mahal on top of it?*

But why should he do that? Having forcibly occupied Raja Mansingh's palace, there was no need for Shahjahan to demolish it, and erect another building in its place. The palace itself would serve as a mausoleum very well.

Moreover, the planning and construction of the Taj Mahal is entirely in accordance with the texts on Hindu architecture.

*How?*

Prof Calude Batley, former Professor of Architecture at the J J School of Arts, Bombay writes, "... The fact that such planning is certainly indigenous to India can be traced in the layout of the simplest temple, in the magnificent temple-town plans of South India, and in various Indian mediaeval town layouts as reflected in the design of such comparatively modern Indian town as Jaipur."

[*The Design Development of Indian Architecture* by Claude Batley, 1934, pxii]

It would be quite absurd to suggest that Shahjahan demolished Raja Mansingh's palace and built a structure on it exactly in accordance with the Hindu architectural texts. Moreover, we are faced with the fact that neither Peter Mundy (of English East India Company) nor Badshahnama



mention any demolition. There is thus no way out but to accept the painful truth that Taj Mahal is not a mausoleum built by Shahjahan but a Hindu Temple Palace usurped by him.

*But then what did Shahjahan do? What did the visitors like Mundy, Tavernier and Manrique see?*

The answer is simple. Shahjahan looted the precious objects, uprooted the Hindu motifs as far as he could, sealed several hundreds of chambers, apartments, halls, rooms, passages, corridors, staircases, ventilators and the like, grafted Koranic inscriptions to give a semblance of a mausoleum and demolished some buildings altogether. Thus what the visitors saw was a colossal vandalism. There is not a single inscription anywhere in the building complex claiming that Shahjahan built this magnificent structure in the memory of beloved wife Mumtaz. The reason is obvious enough.

### **Vandalism by Shahjahan**

Let us just take some examples of Shahjahan's vandalism -

#### **(1) Basement Rooms**

There are two stairs to go down to these rooms, spaced 350 ft apart. Entrances to these were sealed by Shahjahan. The stairs were only discovered in around 1902. Keene says in 1909, " a staircase ascends to the terrace of the Great Basement, where its entrance, closed by red sandstone slab, lay unsuspected, until discovered a few years ago, the clue being given by a small window overlooking the river in each of the two easternmost rooms." *(Handbook to Agra, 1909, p177)*

In fact, due to forces of nature the stone slabs covering the window openings were damaged in course of time and that gave a clue to the existence of these rooms.

#### **(2) Arches inside the Dome**

The Main Dome is in fact a double dome (dome inside a dome). A strange discovery was made in the outer dome in 1946. Mr Vats of Archaeological Survey of India tells us -

"... the dead lime plaster from inside the dome has been removed only to a height of 10 ft all round except on the west where it has been stripped to the full height of 61 ft ... This also has revealed an

interesting feature. **Covering the entire surface of the lower part of the drum, there is a regular and continuous series of eight relieving arches which adds to the strength of the structure."**

[*Ancient India*, 1946, pp 4-7]

But these arches cannot be seen now because Shahjahan had blocked them all up.

(3) Koranic inscriptions

The trick played by Muslim rulers was revealed in early 1970s near the so called Kutb-Minar in Delhi. Old decoration stones fell down, revealing that the Muslim invaders had just turned the stones in the Hindu memorial inside out. So, we see Hindu inscriptions on one side and Koranic inscriptions on the other. It is quite possible that same has happened in Taj Mahal.

(4) Fountains

While carrying out some repairs, Archaeological Survey of India discovered a set of fountains 3 ft below the existing ones. See Times of India 25 June 1973.

But, as usual, it is all 'hush-hush'.

(5) Main Gateway.

This is a four storied building. In 1924 Maulavi M Ahmad wrote, "(After reaching the top floor). Of the four staircases, two go down to the first floor; the **other two are closed in the middle.**"

*Just one last point. Why does not Taj look like a Hindu structure?*

Because we have been brain-washed into thinking that way only. Show any one Percy Brown's *Indian Architecture* part I, plate CXVI Fig I. It shows Govind Dev Temple in Brindaban. Hide the title and ask your friends to say whether it is a temple or a mosque. Their reply will invariably be – It is a mosque! The same analogy applies here also.

\* The same book of P Brown shows Avantismami temple on plate CXXXVIII. Hide the title again and see how many of your friends can recognise it as a temple. They will all say that it is a Church.

\* In 1911, Vincent Smith published a book entitled History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon. On page 30 we find – Temple in Bengali style, Dinajpur. Hide the title. Our friends will say –'It's a Greek Orthodox Church.'

These three examples just illustrate how our thinking is moulded by pre-conceived ideas.

### **Style of Architecture**

One basic flaw needs to be clarified here.

James Fergusson tried to determine various styles of architecture, for the first time in 1855 in his book – *Handbook of Architecture*. He assumed that if a building was being used as a mosque or a tomb, it must have been built by Muslims. As a first attempt that assumption was excusable. But then the Great War of Indian Independence 1857-59 followed, and as new facts became known; instead of modifying history of architecture, he and others invented more and more absurd theories. As a typical example, let us quote from Fergusson's *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, (1910 edition) Vol II page 68 -

"... Be this as it may, for our present purpose, the one fact that is certain is that none of them are now Jaina temples. All are Muhammadan mosques and it will therefore be more logical as well as more convenient to group them with the latter rather than with former class of buildings. Were it not for this, the Arhai-din ka Jhompra at Ajmer – so called might be and has been described as Jaina temple. ... So might a great part of the mosque at the Qutb, near Delhi."

The logic of the father of history of architecture is thus very simple. All those temples that are being used as mosques and tombs must be considered as part of Islamic architecture!! THAT IS HOW HE DEFINES ISLAMIC STYLE OF ARCHITECTURE.

We don't have to accept his version any more. Like Taj Mahal we must determine who built various structures and then decide what is Hindu or Muslim style of architecture and not be carried away by Fergusson.

### **MYSTERIES GALORE AND EXPLAINED**

Once we logically conclude and accept that Taj Mahal is not a mausoleum built by Shahjahan but had been a Hindu Temple Palace, several mysteries, even the ones which we have not been told, can all can be easily explained.

#### **(1) The first Urs of Mumtaz Mahal.**

*History of Taj* by Maulvi Moin-ud-din Ahmad was published in 1905. He says on page 74 -

" Urs is peculiar to India. It is a sort of death anniversary, a commemoration of the demise of a holy man with solemnities, prayers and blessings for the soul of the dead. It is held annually on the recurrence of the day on which he died."

"Now this ceremony was performed by Shah Jahan in honour of Mumtaz for the first time in 1041 A H. **According to Badshahnama the Urs was held with uncommon enthusiasm.**" [but no sadness?]

The reason for enthusiasm is obvious. Within one year of death of Mumtaz, under the pretext of burying her, Shahjahan grabbed a valuable property of Raja Jaisingh which had untold ornaments and articles of gold and silver. It took Shajahan nearly six years to strip late Raja Mansingh's palace (then owned by Mansingh's grandson Raja Jaisingh) of the huge quantity of gold and silver. Hence the pleasure and not sadness on the first anniversary of the lady's death.

### **(2) Burial at Burhanpur**

We had noted that the lady was buried in an awkward spot. Why? Latif had provided the answer. He says,

"The body was interred in a plot of ground in the midst of which was a beautiful fountain which adorned the garden palace of Zenabad." (*Agra Historical and Descriptive*, 1896, pp103/104)

In other words, Shajahan confiscated yet another garden palace of a Hindu Raja!!

### **(3) Cost of scaffolding**

In 1889 Dr Valentine Ball translates and edits *Tavernier's Travels in India*. On pages 109-111 Book I Chapter VII, Tavernier's well known story is given. In addition, we are told, "...**It is said that scaffoldings alone cost more than the entire work**, [ Surprise ! Surprise !! ] **because, from want of wood, they had all to be made of brick, as well as the supports of the arches; this has entailed much labour and a heavy expenditure.** "

So, if the scaffolding cost more than the entire work we know what 'work' was carried out by Shahjahan.

### **(4) Rooms in Main Gateway**

In his book *The Taj Mahal*, Mr David Carroll says in 1972, p 95 " Standing one hundred feet high, the three-storied gate has a colossal archway at the threshold. ... Inside are countless rooms with hallways that wind and divide in such apparent abandon that they seem

intentionally built to confuse; perhaps they were, for they have remained unused for three centuries and their purpose has long confounded the experts. "

Mr Carroll can't think of any use of these rooms in a mausoleum, and as the Main Gateway was never a part of it, the rooms became redundant and remained unused for three centuries.

#### **(5) Pura and Kalas**

*History of Taj* by Moin-ud-din Ahmad was published in 1905. He says - p 55 "...At present the Western "**Pura**" is filled with flower pots and valuable plants. It is a delightful pleasure ground. Half of the other "**Pura**" is occupied by a cowstable. Over against the " **puras** " and West and East respectively from the gate of Mumtazabad lie tombs of Satiunnisa Khanum and Sarhindi Begum."

M Ahmad uses the Sanskrit word **Kalas** for pinnacle. He (1924) describes the replica of the pinnacle on the main dome, pp 40-41 "...The figure of **Kalas** is exactly copied in black stone inserted in the surface of the platform of the cloister on its (Jawab's) northern side. The whole **Kalas** is 30 1/2 ft, the right base of the crown is 8 1/2 feet, the diameter of the globe 4 1/3, the neck is 5 1/2 feet, the globe over it 3 3/4 feet, the arc of the crown is 9 2/3 feet and the cord 5 feet."

[It is interesting to note that the Sanskrit word **Kalas** is used throughout to describe the pinnacle.]

#### **(6) Forgotten chambers**

There are eight chambers surrounding the Cenotaph chamber, located in the East, West, North, South (these are square shaped) and North-east, North-west, South-east and South-west (these are octagonal shaped) directions. They were open to public in 1981 when I visited Taj Mahal, but have been locked since 1990.

There is also a storey above the cenotaph with similar rooms. Most people are not aware of this.

Fanny Parks who visited Taj Mahal in January / February 1835 had noted- "Strangers (i.e. visitors), when visiting the Taj, are so much occupied in viewing the centre apartment, which contains the tombs, that they often omit visiting the eight rooms that surround that central apartment; four of which are square and four of octagonal form; **on the upper floor** are eight rooms of a similar description."

In her book published in 1850, Fanny Parks even reproduced the ground plan which she copied from an original plan, shown to her at the tomb, but it does not show staircase to the upper floor.

In 1924, in his book *Taj and its environments*, Maulavi M Ahmad also reproduces the plan of the central edifice and surrounding chambers. We see the stairs to the upper floor located in the South East as well as South West chambers. These are clearly marked. These chambers (rooms) have no purpose in a Mausoleum, but do make sense in the layout of a Temple or a Palace.

Plan of Central Edifice

**(7) Hidden basements**

We have discussed these in detail. They make sense in a Hindu Temple or Palace, but not in a mausoleum. Therefore Shahjahan must have sealed them.

**(8) Hidden Rooms**

If we carefully examine the marble base which supports the main dome and minarets, we realise that there are large number of rooms, entrances to these are closed with white marble slabs.

**(9) Nagarkhanas (Music Galleries)**

There are two Nagarkhanas (Nakkarkhanas) in Taj Mahal. These are quite appropriate in a Hindu Temple or a Palace, but not in a mausoleum.

**(10) Baoli Burj**

Some 80 ft south of the so called Mosque, is a well called Baoli Burj. As the name implies it has 7 stories with rooms at all the levels. These rooms are very comfortable in summer. The Burj is 50ft in diameter and there are 8 rooms on each floor, size of rooms 9 ft by 9 ft. Once again such a well is quite appropriate in a Hindu Temple or Palace.

**(11) A light colonnade / Courts for Horses and Elephants**

I referred to Twining before. He provides us with some interesting details.

He tells us, " .. p 191 " The gates were shut, but were opened after a short parley with the dewan or porter, who even had the civility to accompany me through the interior courts to a large enclosed area what he said was there for elephants and horses of the Padshah suwarree (the Emperor and his suite)"

" ... A walk paved with flat red stone led through this grove of perfumes to another range of steps, by which I ascended to a magnificent

terrace, bounded on the opposite side by the Jumna to my right and left, at right angles to the river by **a light colonnade**, and from the centre of which rose the architectural glory of India, the celebrated Taje-Mahal."

" ... I walked across the terrace to the left till I came to the colonnade, which bounds it in that direction."

Twining returned after two days, He says, " .. My Mahrattahs picketed their horses in the court of elephants till sunrise..... " (p199)

[Note : There is no purpose for building accommodation for elephants and horses inside a mausoleum. Courts for horses and Elephants are quite usual in Hindu Temples and Palaces.]

[Ref – *Travels in India a hundred years ago*,1893]

### **(12) Gaushala**

There is a Gaushala (cow stable) within the Taj Mahal precincts. It is quite appropriate for a Hindu Temple or Palace, but inappropriate for a mausoleum. Hindus revere the Cow, therefore Muslims hate the cows and take pleasure in killing cows to humiliate Hindus.

### **(13) Boating in river Yamuna (Jumna)**

On the river side, there is a platform 3 ft 6 inch wide extending the whole width of Taj Mahal. It has stone rings built in for anchoring boats.

\* There are also steps from this platform into the river.

Both are appropriate only in a Hindu Temple or Palace.

### **(14) Battlemented Walls**

The perimeter walls on the East and West side of Taj Mahal are interesting. They have defence mechanisms built in at the top. If attacked by an enemy the defenders would pour hot water or oil through the holes on the enemy soldiers climbing up the wall.

This gives a clue of when Taj Mahal was originally built. Such walls are not needed in a mausoleum, but are appropriate to defend a Palace.



Battlemented perimeter wall

**(15) Trees and flowers**

*The Taj and its Environments* by Maulvi M Ahmad was published in 1924. This is the second edition of the book published in 1905 under the title - *History of Taj*. Mr Ahmad tells us:-

p 35 "[In the garden are trees of] *Bela, Motia, Champa, Harsinghar, Jooi, Ketki, Maulsiri, Keora, Seoti, Siraj-mukhi* .etc."

[Note : Leaves and flowers of these trees are used in the worship of Hindu deities. Bela leaves are used only for the worship of Lord Shiva. The Maulvi is so surprised by the names that he puts them in italics!! ]

**(16) Rare Hindu Motifs**

In 1887 *Les Civilisations de L'Inde* by Le Bon (Gustave) was published. He tells us on page 575 – Agra Le taje .... **Rare Hindu motifs are seen.**

**(17) Trident on arches**

In the marble stone lining above each arch, one finds a flower bud. If we look closely we find a Trident in the petals.

**(18) Lotus petals on domes**

On top of every dome we find petals of inverted Lotus flower.

**(19) Pinnacle on the Main Dome**

We need to look at this carefully. Just imagine the picture of Lord Shiva, it would show a moon crescent and river Ganga flowing out from his hair. A similar scene is depicted on the pinnacle. We have normal Kalas (pinnacle), then a moon crescent, then a water pot with mango leaves in it and a coconut on top. If you wish to compare it with a pinnacle on a Mosque, please compare it with that on the Regents Park Mosque, London. The difference is obvious.

**(20) Temple bells**

On the entrance gateway to the central Edifice, we see a line of temple bells covering the entire width.

Main Dome

Pinnacle (enlarged)

Regent's Park Mosque, London  
Dome and Moon Crescent

**(21) Cobras in pairs**

On the Main Gateway (where visitors come in) we can clearly see Cobras in pairs along the entire width. These are also seen on the entrance gateway to the Central Edifice.

**(22) Blazing Sun**

If we stand under any dome in Taj Mahal and look up to the ceiling, we see a blazing sun surrounded by a circle of tridents.

**(23) Sunflowers**

On the walls of the so-called Mosque and so-called Jawab we see Sunflowers as decoration, which is very much keeping with Hindu motifs

**(24) Dhotra flowers**

If we walk around the central edifice we notice the poisonous flowers of Dhotra in the decorations in marble lining. In the Hindu mythology when Gods and Demons churned the ocean for superb gems, the ocean also produced poison. If it was not stemmed it would have destroyed the whole world. Hence Lord Shiva drank all that poison (Halahal). The churning then proceeded. The poisonous Dhotra flowers in the decorations in marble wall linings indicate the worship of Lord Shiva.

**(25) Hidden fountains**

While carrying out some repairs to existing fountains in the centre of Taj Garden, Archaeological Survey of India discovered remains of old fountains below the existing ones. As usual, it was all kept hush-hush. See *Times of India* of 25 June 1973.

**(26) So called Jawab**

The structure on the West of the Central Edifice has long been misused as a Mosque, but the one on the East still has no purpose. The name Jawab is a recent invention.

\* In 1801, Daniells simply said, "it accommodated visitors of distinction." but they assign no name to it.

\* In 1843, Col Hodgson said, "The mosque and its counterpart the mehman khana, as well as six octagonal pavilions of four stories high.. compose a most harmonious whole."

\* In 1972 David Carroll says, p 98 " On the other side of the Taj stands the twin of the mosque, a parallel structure sometimes referred to as the jawab, or "answer." Because it faced away from Mecca it was never used for prayer and, **as a matter of fact, its very presence there is something of an enigma.** Was it a caravansary for pilgrims, or a meeting hall where the faithful gathered before prayer?

Aurangzeb calls it Jamait Khana - a guest house, which is quite appropriate in a Hindu Temple or a Palace, but has no place in a Mausoleum.

**(27) Orientation of so called Mosque**

In 1909, Seventh edition of H G Keene's *Handbook for visitors to Agra* was rewritten and brought up to date by E A Duncan, C E, F G S. We find :

p 106 Footnote - " A recess in any wall, if used by Muhammadans as an altar, is styled a mihrab, provided that walls facing it in prayer, they also face the Kaba or " Temple of Mecca." As Mecca is West of India, mihrabs in Indian masjids, in order to meet this condition, are recessed into the East faces of their West walls..."

**But Mecca is NOT west of Agra. Muslims praying in the so called Mosque at Taj Mahal have been facing Bandar Abbas in Iran and NOT Mecca!!**

**Also, there is not just one recess but three. Why?**

It would be surprising that an ICS officer who worked for 30 years in India would make such a mistake, unless he was simply trying to continue the Taj myth.

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Let us draw on the experience of Prof Bhatnagar. He produced three wonderful booklets in 1976. One of them was - *Were the Rang Mahal and Moti Masjid in Delhi Red Fort, former Hindu temples?*

While preparing this booklet Prof Bhatnagar made a remarkable discovery. He says : -pp 44/46 "... In 1961, I went to the Red Fort in Delhi. I was struck by the fact that the plan of Moti Masjid was not a rectangle. It is odd shaped, because the perambulatory passage is abruptly cut off. I also realised that Kaba is not exactly West of Delhi, it is approximately so. Delhi is 28 degrees 38 minutes North and Kaba is 21 degrees 25 minutes North. I therefore wrote to many Mullahs and Maulavis and pointed out the error made by Muslims in facing West and

not Mecca, when praying. At last, the Imam of Fatehpuri Mosque of Delhi, Mufti Majahar Ullah replied. In his letter of 30 July 1961 he wrote that Mecca is 3 degrees 36 minutes south west of Delhi and Muslims should orient themselves accordingly, when praying."

[some knowledge of spherical geometry is required to understand this point fully.]

*"... It is impossible that a fanatical Muslim, Aurangzeb would not have noticed this discrepancy. But as a Hindu temple was converted he had to put up with it. "*

### **(28) Shahjahan's entry into Agra**

Mundy describes the arrival of Shahjahan at Agra from Burhanpur, on 1 June 1632. He says, on pages 194/5, "...And in this manner hee came to his garden of Darree ca baag, where hee entered and remained there till the Tenth currant [June 1632] when about Midnight, close shutt up in a Palanqueene, hee was brought to his Castle of Agra about 2 miles from the Garden."

" The reason of his Comeing in att that hower is that the Kinge and great men have Wizards [ astrologers ] whoe are Comonly Bramanes [Brahmans] or Mullaes [mullahs], (Moore [Muhammadan ] priests ). Theis doe calculate such dayes and howers as are fortunate or unluckie, soe that they will not undertake any Journie, or begin any enterprize of purport but on such a Tyme as shall be delivered them by the said Wizards..."

Such was the importance of court astrologers! The Emperor could not enter his own capital because the time was not auspicious and had to wait till midnight to enter his palace. And yet there is no mention of any auspicious day and time for starting building of Taj Mahal. This is no surprise. As there was no construction, no auspicious moment was needed.

### **(29) No visit to Taj Mahal by Shahjahan**

Shahjahan was imprisoned in Agra Red Fort by his son Aurangzeb for seven years (1658-1665). And yet during this period he never once requested permission to visit Taj Mahal, which is supposed to be tomb of his wife. The Fort is only one mile away from Taj Mahal. The reason was obvious. Shahjahan knew that his wife was not buried in Taj Mahal.

### **CONCLUSION**

*Thus, we have been repeatedly told nothing but a bunch of lies about Taj Mahal all these years. Is there any reason, apart from false pride, stubbornness and natural reluctance to change, why historians are not prepared to accept the truth about Taj Mahal?*

Yes. Once they accept the fact that Taj Mahal was a Hindu building, they will soon have to start thinking afresh about several other structures and monuments such as the Red Fort, the Jama Masjid and Kutb Minar at Delhi, the Red Fort at Agra, Gol Gumbaz at Bijapur, almost every structure supposed to have been raised by foreign Muslim invaders. They will have no other way but to accept the fact that all such structures are of Hindu origin but captured, misused, renamed and simply misrepresented as built by the captors.

*As true historians, they ought not hesitate to admit such truth.*

The matter does not end there. The entire history of India for the last 1,200 years will have to be re-written. That is too much for them to bear.

*But why should Indian history need to be re-written?*

History of architecture goes hand in hand with history and culture of the people. Architecture represents the resources, capabilities, craftsmanship, imagination, prosperity, grandeur and opulence of the people.

Once we logically and irrefutably conclude that buildings like Taj and other monuments were originally built by Hindu Kings, Generals, Noblemen and others, but were vandalised by Muslim rulers, it becomes evident that history of both races – Hindu and Muslim is quite different in all respects, from what we have been led to believe.

Historians would have us believe that India was a barren land. Successive invading Muslims brought to India, music, dancing, poetry, literature, painting, gardens, fountains, art, architecture, astronomy etc. It does not take a genius to realise that all this is absurd and totally false. Muslim rulers brought nothing but terror, torture, massacres, rape, loot and destruction to India. Their own chronicles make no bones about it! They themselves do not claim to have built anything! It is their second or third generation progenies who make such claims for their forefathers.

Elliot and Dowson's *History of India as told by its own Historians*, The Muhammadan Period Volume I, was published in London in 1867 by Trubner and Co. Other seven volumes were published over next ten years. In his preface, Sir Henry M Elliot states that he is dealing with the history of only the Mohammedan rule in India. He gives some examples of how in the 18th and 19th century, Muslims had fabricated various chronicles. **He also concludes that the true picture of Muslim rule was far from what was generally believed. It was full of murders and massacres, razing of temples, forcible conversions and marriages, sensuality and drunkenness. Common people were plunged into the lowest depths of wretchedness and despondency.**

Moreover, the truth about the Taj will make everyone wonder how various historians have turned a blind eye to the most glaring inconsistencies, discrepancies, anomalies and even absurdities for so long. The blunders of Indian historical research are colossal indeed! Let us take another example -

During the British Raj, British Historians divided Indian History into three parts namely, Hindu Era, Muslim Era and British Era. They did not call their rule as *Christian* Era. But the words 'Muslim Era' created a wrong impression. By depicting that the '*Indian Muslims*' were the rulers in India before the English they created a bloating in the minds of Indian Muslims leading to false pride and arrogance, intransigency, monstrous ambitions, resulting ultimately in the partition of India in August 1947.

This impression is **TOTALLY FALSE**. The rulers and the ruling class were Foreign Muslims and they utterly despised Native Indian Muslims. For more details readers should refer to the Author's work – *British Historians, Muslims and tragedy of India*.

*So what do the historians do?*

Like Government ministers trying to suppress and prevent leakages of scandals and misdeeds like Watergate (during the days of American President Nixon in 1970s) or the Katyn Forest Massacre (carried out by the Russians in Poland in the 1940s), they keep quiet. And like the three wise monkeys they pretend to "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no



evil”

Not one Historian has openly challenged our research work.

Let us see what bitter experiences one of our friends had in 1975.

Prof Mahesh Swarup Bhatnagar was Head of the Department of Geography, M.M.H College, Ghaziabad (India) from 1948 to 1966. In 1961, he visited the so-called Kutb Minar and started to realise that we are not being told the true history of medieval India. After a great deal of research, he started to write a series called – *Stones speak*. He had published three wonderful booklets before his untimely death

- Dhruv Stambh alias Kutb Minar, 1974
- Does the Red Fort belong to Shahjahan's time ? (1974)
- Were the Rang Mahal and Moti Masjid in the Delhi Red Fort, ancient Hindu temples? (in Hindi), 1975

He asks some very straightforward questions and while answering them exposes the falsity of Indo-Islamic Architecture. In the preface to the second booklet he says, "**Many writers, while giving accounts of historical buildings, seldom take pains of seeing them closely and drawing results from their personal observations. Generally they find it more convenient to adopt descriptions given by some old chronicler and repeat the same old tale in their own words caring little for the correctness of the story. If by chance or by deliberate misrepresentation the chronicler gave an exaggerated or distorted account, the mistake is carried on from generation to generation. In course of time the mistake gets so embedded in the minds of people that they have but to believe the inaccurate account to be true. Any attempt at correcting a mistake of long standing meets vehement opposition. The opposition mounts to such a degree of resentment as to denounce a person or persons carrying on sincere research in the field to be biased, communal or mad. All but scholarly persons fall in a line with the denouncers.**"

Pity! But then who would undertake the gigantic task of writing true Indian History?

Mr P N Oak has been trying to expose blunders in Indian historical

research for the last 40 years. I (the author) have been doing the same for nearly 30 years. Dr Bedekar of Thane, India, has established Institute for Oriental Studies for the same purpose in 1984. Other similar minded persons need to come together. Would you like to join us and help us?

Please contact me, the author.

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Appendix A - Travellers' Accounts :

Shahjahan returned to Agra on 12 June 1632. Travellers' accounts from this date till 1853 are available as follows :

Traveller	Year of visit to Taj Mahal	Year of Publication	of of
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		travellers' account in English
Contemporary Travellers		
Fransisco Pelsaert (A Senior Factor of the Dutch East India Company stationed at Agra )	1620 – 27	1926
Peter Mundy (A merchant from Cornwall, England, employed by the English East India Co.)	1631-33	1914
J A de Mandelslo (A German traveller)	1638	1662
Jean Baptise Tavernier (A French jewel merchant)	1640-41 & 1665	1677, 1811, 1889, 1925
Sebastian Manrique (A Portuguese monk of the Augustinian Order)	1640-41	1927
Niccoli Manucci (An Italian adventurer)	1664	1907
Francois Bernier (A French Physician)	1665	1826, 1891 1914

Note : References are made to Herbert, Thevenot, Joannes and Chardin. But we have to remember that -

(1) Sir Thomas Herbert went to Persia in 1627 as Secretary to an

English Embassy which was sent there in that year. After staying for two years in the East (in the course of which he paid a short visit to Surat but did not go to Agra.) he returned home.

(2) Thevenot the Frenchman travelled from Surat to Masulipattam and back and did not go to Agra.

(3) De Laet Joannes, a Director of the Dutch East India Company did not even visit India.

(4) Chardin's *Travels in India* was never published and his manuscript has not been found.

Traveller	Year of visit to Taj Mahal	Year of Publication of travellers' account in English
Later-day travellers		
Thomas and William Daniell (English painters)	1789	1795, 1801
Thomas Twining (First English Governor of Bihar 1800-1804)	1794	1893
Major Thorn (English East India Co)	1803-1804	1811
Bishop Heber (of Calcutta)	1824	1828
Col Hodgson (English East India Co)	1825	1843



Major Archer (East India Co)	1828	1833
Captain Godfry Mundy (English East India Co)	1828	1832
Fanny Parks (Wife of a British Customs Officer stationed at Prayag)	1835	1850
Lt Col Sleeman (English East India Co)	1836	1844
Captain Leopold Von Orlich (German Army Officer)	1842	1845
Bayard Taylor (An American writer)	1853	1859

We have taken note of all that these persons have said. Most of them have just repeated the legend.

APPENDIX B: Voyages of Tavernier

First voyage – Paris (1631) - Persia – Aleppo (Syria) - Alexandretta - Malta - Italy.- Paris (1633)

Second voyage – Paris (Sept 1638) - Marseilles - Alexandretta – Aleppo (6 weeks) -Shiraz -Ispahan (May 1639 - Dec 1639) - Dacca - Agra (winter of 1640-41) - Surat - Goa - Golconda - Surat (spring 1642) - Bandar Abbas (beginning of 1643) - Paris.

Third voyage - Paris - Alexandretta -Aleppo (March 1644) - Ispahan - Surat (Jan 1645) - Daulatabad - Nander - Golconda -Raolconda - Golconda - Ispahan (end of 1647) Surat - Mingrela (Vengrula) in Jan 1648 - Goa - Vengurla - Batavia - Holland - Paris

Fourth voyage - Paris - Marseilles -Alexandretta - Aleppo (7 Oct 1651) - Bandar Abbas -Masulipatam (2 July 1652) - Madras - Gandikot (13 August 1652) met Mir Jumla- Golconda - Surat - Ahmedabad, met Shaista Khan - Surat - Aurangabad - Golconda (1 April 1653) - Surat - Bandar Abbas - Ispahan - Paris (autumn 1655)

Fifth voyage - Feb 1657 Paris - Marseilles - Isphan - Surat [May 1659] - Golconda - Surat [end of 1660 - beginning of 1661]

Sixth voyage - Paris (November 1663)- Marseilles - Ispahan - Bandar Abbas (April 1665) - Surat [May 1665] - Burhanpur - Sirnoj- Gwalior - Agra - Jahanabad (Delhi -September 1665) - met Augangzeb - purchased diamonds - asked to stay to witness his annual festival - fete concluded 9 November -Agra - started for Bengal with Bernier -

Allahabad -Benares -Patna -Rajmahal - Dacca (12 Feb 1666) - Patna -  
Agra (August) - Surat  
(1 November 1666) - Ispahan - Paris (6 December 1668).

**A word of gratitude**

\* We only see the tip of iceberg. 90% of which remains hidden. In a similar manner, the contributions made by Hindu wives remain unknown. I have been involved in historical research since 1977. My wife Mrs Vinita supported me throughout. She acted as a good listener. My daughters Vaidehi and Varsha also always encouraged me.

\* My longstanding friend Pandit Ramakrishnayya of London is an extremely busy Hindu Priest. But he found time to read the manuscript thoroughly and meticulously and made many suggestions of improvement.

He pointed out my mistakes and showed where corrections were required. He also pointed out where more explanations were necessary and where a reader was likely to be confused. I discussed with him many changes to improve clarity of thought and expressions. He has always been a good listener.

The author is deeply grateful to all above.

## **About the author Dr V S Godbole**

Dr Vasudev Shankar GODBOLE was born in Pune, India in 1941. He was educated at Bhave School, M.E.S College (now Garware College) and the College of Engineering in Pune. He graduated as a Civil Engineer from Pune University in 1962. After working for Mumbai City Corporation he came to England in 1966 and has lived there ever since. He worked for Civil Engineering contractors for 20 years and for London Underground Railway for 20 years. He is now retired.

In 1978 he read Prof P N Oak's book on Taj Mahal and became curious about the truth behind that monument. Godbole has been involved in historical research after he became convinced that Taj Mahal was NOT built by Shahjahan. He became deeply engrossed in historical research. His main concern is how the history of Hindus has been twisted and falsified by our enemies. His works are as follows :-

Taj Mahal : Simple Analysis of a Great Deception  
Why Rewrite Indian History?  
God Save India (Punjab Politics of the 1980s)  
Taj Mahal and the Great British Conspiracy  
Around London in ten hours (A special tour of places in London, associated with Indian Freedom fighters)  
Rationalism of Veer Savarkar (in English and Marathi)  
British Historians, Muslims and tragedy of India.

Since 1987 he has been conducting a Special Tour of London visiting places associated with Indian freedom fighters.

Dr Godbole is also a qualified Teacher of Mathematics and a Researcher in History. After living in England for more than three decades, Godbole has had first hand experience of the deep-rooted anti-Hindu and Pro-Muslim attitude of the English.

SOME OPINIONS (On the first edition)

"..... It seems to me that your research data is completely supportive of your contentions and I am delighted and grateful to be enlightened."  
Prof. Buckminster Fuller

Philadelphia University,  
U.S.A.

"..... I have read the papers with much interest and find your analysis very penetrating....I am most grateful to you for bringing these papers to my notice and I am circulating them among colleagues here."

S. E.Hodgson  
Director

Festival of India  
London. (April 1982)

"..... I was very much interested in your material on Taj Mahal. .... Personally I found it extremely interesting but it was not suitable material for this unit..... I wish I could have been more helpful. I think you have an interesting idea but I cannot think of any other unit in the BBC that handles material of this kind...."

Anthony Isaacs  
Executive Producer,  
Travel & Exploration Unit  
BBC T.V.

"..... I find the whole subject fascinating and if we find anyone interested in making a documentary on the subject, we shall certainly get back in touch with you."

Sue Woodford  
Channel Four TV Company,  
London.

I was very interested to read your analysis of the origins of Taj Mahal.... If I have another opportunity to write on this subject, I will bear your offer (of conducted tour of Taj Mahal) in mind."

Brian Jackman  
Environment Correspondent,  
'The Sunday Times', London.

"..... Thank you for your most interesting article which I have sent on to the Aga Khan Foundation for comment."

Sir Hugh Casson  
President,  
Royal Academy of Arts  
London.

".... I was fully fascinated by your most scholarly study of the Taj Mahal and the so called Indo-Saracenic School of Architecture.... We are greatly indebted to you and I will certainly have your observations right beside me when we next revise the relevant chapters."

Robin Dannthorn  
Regional Editor,  
Fodors Modern Guides,  
Bangkok.