

Taj Mahal - It is time to tell the truth.

There are many legends about the Taj Mahal. But one sentence is common in all of them. "For the construction, 20,000 men worked for 22 years." This is well known throughout the world. The simple question is – where do these figures come from?

These figures come from a book *Travels in India* by J B Tavernier, a French jewel merchant. He was a great adventurer who made six voyages to India in the days of Shivaji (1638 to 1668). Tavernier says, "I witnessed the commencement and completion of this monument (Taj Mahal) on which 20,000 men worked incessantly for 22 years."

Tavernier's book was first published in French in 1675. In those days, it was a great adventure for a single man to travel over such a long distance, face many difficulties, deal with peoples of many cultures and languages, adjust to their customs and traditions, and come home safely – that in itself was incredible. In addition Tavernier carried out a trade in precious stones like diamonds. He completed such voyages, not once but six times. His book was therefore a great sensation at that time. It was naturally translated into English and during 1677 to 1811; nine editions of the English translation were published, whereas during the same period twenty-two editions of the French book were printed.

In 1889 Dr Ball translated the original French book into English, corrected some mistakes in earlier translation and provided extensive footnotes. He also studied Tavernier's movements thoroughly and provided details of his six voyages. From this it is clear that Tavernier came to Agra only twice – in the winter of 1640-41 and in 1665. This raises another interesting question.

Historians say that Mumtaz, wife of Shahjahan died in 1631 and the construction of Taj Mahal started immediately. But if that is the case Tavernier could not have seen the commencement of Taj Mahal, as he came to Agra nearly 10 years later. Aurangzeb had imprisoned his father Shahjahan in the Red Fort of Agra since 1658 and usurped power. No historian claims that Aurangzeb completed Taj Mahal. So, Tavernier could not have seen the completion of Taj Mahal either. And that being the case his statement that 20,000 men worked on it incessantly is meaningless. Why have Historians kept this truth from us for the last 117 years? The reason is simple. It strikes at the heart of the legend.

Badshahnama – what does it say?

British Historians have proclaimed that in India, Hindu Kings had no historical sense. Historical records were kept only by the Muslim rulers. Fair enough, then let us turn to Badshahnama which was written during the reign of Shahjahan. Asiatic Society of Bengal published the Persian text of Badshahnama in two parts, part I in 1867 and part II in 1868. The compilation was done by two Maulavis, under the superintendence of an English Major. The funny thing is that no one quotes Badshahnama to explain how Taj Mahal was built. Why?

Elliot and Dowson, two English gentlemen undertook the formidable task of writing history of India from the attack on Sindh by Mohammed bin Kasim in the 8th century to the fall of Marathas in the 19th century. A period covering some 1200 years. But it

was written, based on chronicles of Muslim rulers only. Elliot and Dowson's work was published in 8 volumes during 1867 to 1877. Volume 7 deals with the reigns of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. And yet in the entire volume we do not find the word 'Taj Mahal.' The authors should have said, "Though we have presented history of Shahjahan based on his official chronicle Badshahnama, we did not find any reference to Taj Mahal in it." They did no such thing. And Historians have kept even this information from us for the last 130 years.

In 1896 Khan Bahaddur Syed Muhammad Latif wrote a book entitled *Agra Historical and Descriptive*. He refers to Badshahnama many times but does not quote specific page numbers. On page 105 he says, " – The site selected for the mausoleum was originally a palace of Raja Mansingh but it was now the property of his grandson Raja Jaisingh." Many authors have referred to Latif in their bibliography but have not cared to see what he has said. This truth was also hidden away from us by our Historians.

In 1905 H R Nevill, ICS, compiled Agra District Gazetteer. In it he changed the words '*Raja Mansingh's Palace*' to '*Raja Mansingh's piece of land*'. Ever since all historians have followed suit and repeated ' Shahjahan purchased Raja Mansingh's piece of land, at that time in the possession of his grandson Raja Jaisingh.' This deception has been going on for more than a century.

One may ask, "Why would an English officer be interested in playing such a mischief?" Well if we look at the events of those times the reason is clear cut.

1901	Viceroy Lord Curzon separated some districts from Punjab to create a Muslim majority North West Frontier Province. Hindus became an insignificant minority in this province and that marked the beginning of their misfortune.
1903	Curzon declared his intention to partition Bengal to create a Muslim majority province of East Bengal
1905	Curzon resigned but put into effect the partition of Bengal
1906	A Muslim delegation led by Agakhan called upon new Viceroy Lord Minto. Muslims pleaded that in any political reforms they should be treated separately and favourably. This move was obviously engineered by the British rulers. December – Muslim League was started in Dacca.
1909	In the Morley - Minto reforms Muslims were granted separate electorates.

We should also remember that during 1873 and 1914, some English officers had translated into English the Persian texts of Babur-nama, Humayun-nama, Akbar-nama, Ain-e-Akbari and Tazuk - i - Jehangiri, but NOT Badshahnama.

Judging from above events it is obvious why Mr Nevill played the mischief when compiling Agra District Gazetteer in 1905.

It is astonishing that though Maulavi Ahmad (History of Taj 1905) and Sir Jadunath Sarkar (Anecdotes of Aurangzeb, 1912) repeat that Raja Mansingh's piece of land was purchased by Shahjahan, they also provide a reference - Badshahnama,

Volume I page 403. Strange as it may sound, no one had bothered to see what is written on that page.

In 1964 Mr P N Oak of New Delhi started having his doubts about Taj Mahal. He put forward an argument that it was originally a Hindu Palace. Oak had to cross swords with many historians. One of his opponents was a Kashmiri Pandit. Eventually they went to Government of India Archives. At the suggestion of the Librarian there the Pandit started to read Badshahnama, soon he came to Volume I page 403. One line read – *va pesh azin manzil-e-Raja Mansingh bood, vadari vakt ba Raja Jaisingh*. He confessed that Shahjahan took over Raja Mansingh's palace for burial of Mumtaz. We owe so much to this honest opponent of Mr Oak. He gave word by word translation of pages 402 and 403 to Mr Oak who promptly published it in his book *Taj Mahal is a Hindu Palace* (1968). However, Mr Oak never stated that the translation was NOT his. It was done for him by a Persian expert. That made life of his opponents easy. They said, "Mr Oak's translation is wrong."

I obtained Oak's book in London in 1977. I made a study for one year. First of all I read all the references generally quoted by Historians and writers. That was made possible by my being in England. Mr Oak did not have that facility. All the references led to the same conclusion that Taj Mahal is a Hindu Palace and it was NOT built by Shahjahan. My booklet entitled – *Taj Mahal : Simple Analysis of a Great Deception* was published in 1986. In 1981 while going through some references I started suspecting that the British knew the true nature of Taj Mahal for a long time but had deliberately suppressed the truth. Eventually my research was published in 10 parts in the Quarterly *Itihas Patrika* of Thane (India). I collected all the information available on Taj Mahal over the 200 year period from 1784 to 1984, and shown how the British suppressed vital pieces of evidence or twisted the truth. My research continued and was published in 1996 under the title – *Taj Mahal and the Great British Conspiracy*

Taj legend exposed in England in 1980

Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) is a reputable Institution in London. In 1980, in their monthly Journal, they published two letters challenging the validity of usual Taj Legend. One was by Mr Oak, the other by me. No one has refuted our arguments. Mr Oak refers to Badshahnama, Volume I page 403. What have I disclosed in my letter?

What was Agra City like before Shahjahan came to power? That is the question dodged by all Historians. In the 17th century, the Dutch like the English were trying to trade in India. They had a Factory (trading post) in Agra. Fransisco Pelsaert, was their Senior Factor (Merchant) at Agra from 1620 to 1627. In 1626 he prepared a commercial report for his directors in Holland. By strange coincidence, he describes Agra City at that time. He says, "The city is narrow and long, because all the rich and influential people have built their palaces on the river bank and this stretches for 10 ½ miles. I will mention some of the well known ones. Starting from the North there is the palace of Bahadur Khan, Raja Bhoj, Then comes the Red Fort. (Pelsaert then describes the Fort) beyond it is Nakhas – a great market, then follow the palaces of great Lords – Mirza Abdulla, Aga Naur Mahabat Khan, Late Raja Mansingh, Raja Madho Singh."

English translation of this report was available since 1925. And yet no Historian refers to it. Why? The reason is simple. In 1626 Pelsaert has said that 10 ½ mile stretch of the river-bank was full of palaces, Late Raja Mansingh's Palace being the last but one. Badshahnama says that Shahjahan took over this palace for burying his wife Mumtaz. Thus what we call Taj Mahal today is nothing but Late Raja Mansingh's Palace. That is the truth which Historians have kept away from us. My efforts had one effect. In 1982 Archaeological Survey of India, published a booklet entitled – *Taj Museum*. Though the authors repeat the usual legend they say, “ Mumtaz died in Burhanpur and was buried there. Six months later Shahjahan exhumed her body and sent her coffin to Agra, on that site until then stood Late Raja Mansingh's Palace..... “
Today that palace is called Taj Mahal. Nothing could be simpler. What building work is needed for burying a corpse in a Palace?

Dr V S Godbole
England

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Akshaya Tritiya

v.godbole3@ntlworld.com
v.godbole3@yahoo.co.uk