



ROLE OF TAJ MAHAL IN ESTABLISHING THE HINDUSTAN AS HISTORIC LEGENDARY COUNTRY

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ABSTRACT

The beautiful white marble edifice of the Taj Mahal, India is an awe-inspiring sight for the tourists of the world. It is established worldwide as an emblem of love and romance. UNESCO World Heritage Site is admired universally as one of the 'seven wonders of the world' for its beauty. The Taj Mahal in Agra is a monument which no other in the world can match its beauty and grandeur. More than 350 years have passed since the Taj Mahal was built in Agra, but it has not lost its romantic aura, which attracts millions of visitors to India to experience it. Called the most beautiful temple in the world, this white-marbled mausoleum of India has also been a subject of curiosity for many.

KEYWORDS: Taj Mahal, Historic, Legendary Country

INTRODUCTION

The Taj Mahal is located on the right bank of the Yamuna River, in the Agra District in Uttar Pradesh. The management of the Taj Mahal complex is carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India and the legal protection of the monument and the control over the regulated area around the monument is through the various legislative and regulatory frameworks that have been established, including the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1958 and Rules 1959 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and Validation); which is adequate to the overall administration of the property and buffer areas. Additional supplementary laws ensure the protection of the property in terms of development in the surroundings.

METHODOLOGY

The data was collected through newspapers, magazines and websites. The place was visited, caretakers, local residents and related persons were interviewed. Collected information is presented in this study.

FINDINGS

The story about the construction of the Taj Mahal has been firmly associated with the life story of Emperor Shah Jahan's third wife Arjumand Banu Begum, also named as Mumtaz. She died in 1631 and construction

of mausoleum began in 1632. Construction of main building continued for 18 years and the entire complex, immediate adjuncts such as Mosque, wall, and Gateway, took another four years for completion. In development of Taj Mahal complex nearly one thousand elephants handled the transport of heavy building materials. The two-decade construction project may have involved over 20,000 artisans. Credit of designing the building complex is given to Turkish Architect Ustad Ahmad Lahauri. Much of the intricate calligraphy work was done by Abd-al Haqq known as Amanat Khan Shirazi. French explorer Jean-Baptiste Tavernier visited India and Taj Mahal in 1665.

The Taj contains a vast Mughal garden that encompasses nearly 17 hectares with an oblong reflective pool. The white marble exterior is inlaid with semi-precious stones, floral designs, and arabesques. The dome, 80 feet high and 50 feet in diameter inside, forms a bulb outside, tapering to a spike topped by a crescent. There is a mosque, the guest house and the main gateway on the south, the outer courtyard and its cloisters were added. The building has meticulous symmetry across its long and wide diameters. The octagonal tomb chamber is lit by light passing through intricately carved screens. However, the grave site is not perfectly symmetrical. Mumtaz Mahal's casket is in the exact center of the Palace crypt. Emperor Shah Jahan's grave, introduced to the mausoleum following his death in 1666, and has a west-of-center resting place.

Raved as one fine example of Mughal architecture with a style that brought Persian, Islamic, and Indian architectural elements together into one place and merged them to form the ever wonderful Taj Mahal, it is believed that the monument is one of a kind. The Taj Mahal is considered to be the greatest architectural achievement in the whole range of Indo-Islamic architecture. Its recognized architectonic beauty has a rhythmic combination of solids and voids, concave and convex and light shadow; such as arches and domes further increases the aesthetic aspect. The color combination of lush green space, reddish pathway and blue sky over it show cases the monument in ever changing tints and moods. The relief work in marble and inlay with precious and semi-precious stones make it a monument apart.

The uniqueness of Taj Mahal lies in some truly remarkable innovations carried out by the horticulture planners and architects of Shah Jahan. One such genius planning is the placing of tomb at one end of the quadripartite garden rather than in the exact Centre, which added rich depth and perspective to the distant view of the monument. The tomb is further raised on a square platform with the four sides of the octagonal base of the minarets extended beyond the square at the corners. The top of the platform is reached through a lateral flight of steps provided in the Centre of the southern side. The ground plan of the Taj Mahal is in perfect balance of composition, the octagonal tomb chamber in the Centre, encompassed by the portal halls and the four corner rooms.

The plan is repeated on the upper floor. The exterior of the tomb is square in plan, with chamfered corners. The large double storied domed chamber, which houses the cenotaphs of Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan, is a perfect octagon in plan. The hues and the shades of the stones used to make the leaves and the flowers appear almost real. The cenotaph of Mumtaz Mahal is in perfect Centre of the tomb chamber, placed on a rectangular platform decorated with inlaid flower plant motifs. The four free-standing minarets at the corners of the platform added a hitherto unknown dimension to the Mughal architecture. The four minarets provide not only a kind of spatial reference to the monument but also give a three dimensional effect to the edifice.

The most impressive in the Taj Mahal complex is the main gate which stands majestically in the Centre of the southern wall of the forecourt. The gate is flanked on the north front by double arcade galleries. The garden in front of the galleries is subdivided into four quarters by two main walk-ways and each quarters in turn subdivided by the narrower cross-axial walkways, on the Timurid-Persian scheme of the walled in garden. The enclosure walls on the east and west have a pavilion at the Centre.

The Taj Mahal is a perfect symmetrical planned building, with an emphasis of bilateral symmetry along a central axis on which the main features are placed. The building material used is brick-in-lime mortar veneered with red sandstone and marble and inlay work of precious, semi-precious stones. The mosque and the guest house in the Taj Mahal complex are built of red sandstone in contrast to the marble tomb in the Centre. Both the buildings have a large platform over the terrace at their front. Both the mosque and the guest house are the identical structures. They have an oblong massive prayer hall consist of three vaulted bays arranged in a row with central dominant portal. The frame of the portal arches and the spandrels are veneered in white marble. The spandrels are filled with flowery arabesques of stone intarsia and the arches bordered with rope molding.

Integrity is maintained in the intactness of tomb, mosque, guest house, main gate and the whole Taj Mahal complex. The physical fabric is in good condition and structural stability, nature of foundation, verticality of the minarets and other constructional aspects of Taj Mahal have been studied and continue to be monitored. To control the impact of deterioration due for atmospheric pollutants, an air control monitoring station is installed to constantly monitor air quality and control decay factors as they arise. To ensure the protection of the setting, the adequate management and enforcement of regulations in the extended buffer zone is needed. In addition, future development for tourist facilities will need to ensure that the functional and visual integrity of the property is maintained, particularly in the relationship with the Agra Fort.

There are varied legends associated with construction of the Taj Mahal. These myths of the Taj Mahal are not yet proven but surely attract people from all over the world to visit the magnificent sight renowned for varied stories. It is believed that the Taj Mahal apart from containing the representative grave of Mumtaz Mahal also contains her real grave inside. This myth says that the craftsmen who had constructed the Taj Mahal were disfigured after its completion. It's believed that Shah Jahan had ordered to chop off the hands of the architects and craftsmen after the completion of the monuments so that they could never build a monument as beautiful as the Taj ever again. It is believed that when Taj Mahal first saw the light of the day, the precious, semi-precious, and other priceless decorative items it was adorned with, shone as if the stars themselves came down to bask it in a heavenly glory.

CONCLUSION

An area of 10,400 sq km around the Taj Mahal is defined to protect the monument from pollution. The fund provided by the government is adequate for the overall conservation, and maintenance of the complex to supervise activities at the site under the guidance of the Superintending Archaeologist of the Agra Circle. The implementation of an Integrated Management plan is necessary to ensure that the property maintains the existing conditions, particularly in the light of significant pressures derived from visitation that will need to be adequately managed.

Taj Mahal represents the finest architectural and artistic achievement through perfect harmony and excellent craftsmanship in a whole range of Indo-Islamic sepulchral architecture. As a symbol of rich history of India it is a masterpiece of architectural style in conception, treatment and execution and has unique aesthetic qualities in balance, symmetry and harmonious blending of various elements.

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