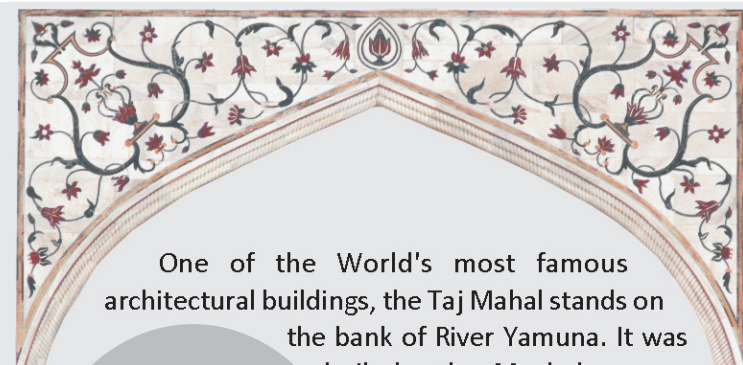




One of the World's most famous architectural buildings, the Taj Mahal stands on the bank of River Yamuna. It was built by the Mughal emperor



Mumtaz Mahal

(Mumtaz Mahal) was discovered from the District Dhule, Maharashtra.

The benign Mumtaz Mahal dauntlessly accompanied the ruler on his military campaigns and administration, being a constant pillar of support. 17th June of 1631

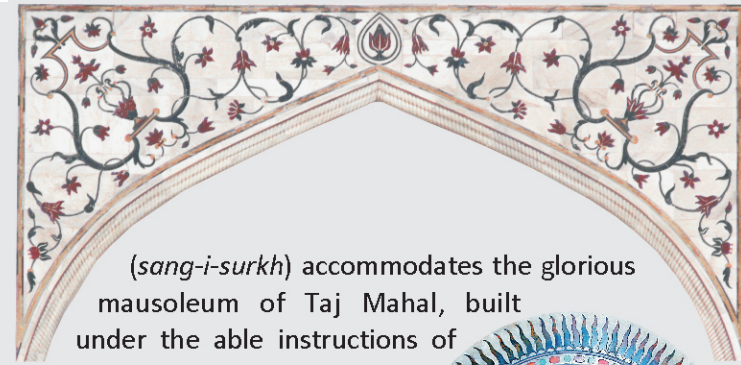


A.D brought along the death of the beautiful Mumtaz Mahal that shattered the Emperor. The queen (Mumtaz Mahal) was laid to rest at Zainabad, across the river Tapti, in the form of *Amanat* (a temporary burial). The Emperor had then vowed to erect a sublime mausoleum in her memory, unlike any other in the world, which brought about the construction of the magnificent Taj Mahal.

The city of Agra, built out of Red sand stone



Shah Jahan



(*sang-i-surkh*) accommodates the glorious mausoleum of Taj Mahal, built under the able instructions of the famed king Shah Jahan

who invited blueprint of all famous architects from all over the world. Formerly the land where the Taj Mahal presently stands, belonged to the Kachhwahas of Ajmer (Rajasthan), acquired in lieu of four *havelis*, as is testified by a court historian, Abdul Hamid Lahauri, in his work famous, the *Badshah-Namah* and the *firman*s (royal decrees).

The layout plan of Taj Mahal was prepared by Ustad Isa Afaudi of Turkey; and, Ahmad Lahauri of Lahore. Mir Abdul Karim supervised the construction of the mausoleum.

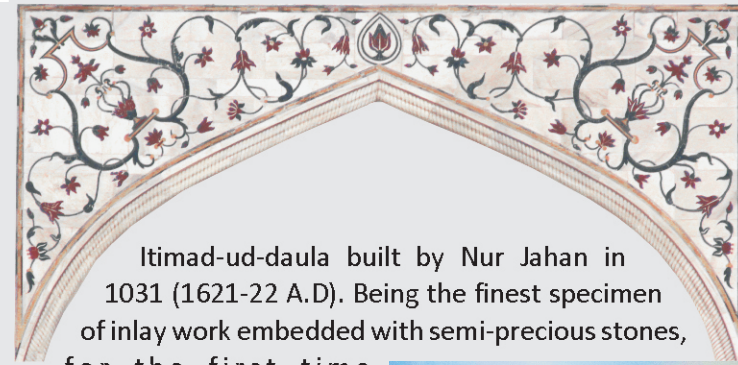


Shah Jahan, whose reign is known as the Golden Age of Mughal art and architecture, was himself exceptional in the knowledge of art. His life time had been spent travelling various sites and



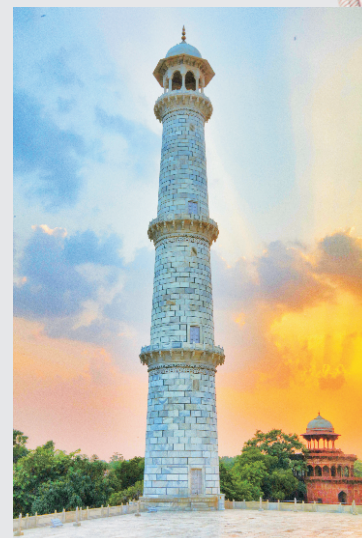
perceiving excellent specimens of architecture, including Mughal monuments. This magnificent marbled mausoleum was inspired by the earlier

monuments like the Tomb of Hoshang Shah built in 1435, the elegant Tomb of Humayun built by Mirak Mirza Ghiyath in 1565-1569 A.D., and the Tomb of Khan-i-Khanan Abdur Rahim Khan, Delhi, built in 1627 A.D.. He was furthermore impressed by the corner minarets of Akbar's Tomb and supplemented them to the main structure of Taj Mahal. The enigmatic Shah Jahan, for making this tomb an unconditional splendor, was significantly influenced by the double storied mausoleum of



Itimad-ud-daula built by Nur Jahan in 1031 (1621-22 A.D). Being the finest specimen of inlay work embedded with semi-precious stones,

for the first time introduced here. Impeccable quality of white marble (*Sang-i-marmar*) from Makrana and its neighboring areas of Rajasthan was used for external veneering. Unsurpassed quality of lime mortar was used as binding material to build the brick and stone masonry work of Taj Mahal. While bricks locally known as *lakhauri*, for internal constructions, were locally prepared; semi-precious stones for inlay ornamentation were brought from distant regions of India, Ceylon, Tibet, China and Afghanistan.



The construction of Taj Mahal was started in the 12th of December, 1631 A.D. This awe-inspiring garden- tomb, an image of the Islamic "garden of paradise" cost nearly 41 million rupees and 500 kilos of gold, the labour of about 20000 workers, and a total of 13 years to produce the overwhelming mausoleum by the time of twelfth *Urs* of the late queen Mumtaz Mahal on 17th Zi'l Qa'Da1052 (6th Feb 1643 A.D). But the final conclusion of the work, including the calligraphy work over the main gate was completed only by 1057 or 1647-48 A.D., as is evident from the date of the inscription. In the ornamentation of Taj Mahal about



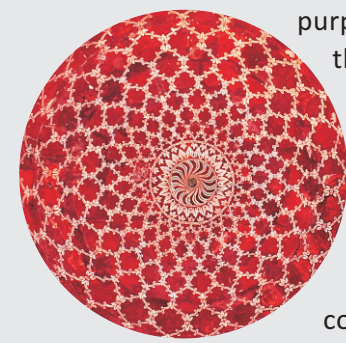
fifty diverse assortments of precious and semi precious stones were employed in the inlay work. The filigree screen daintily carved from a single block of marble was meant to veil the area around the royal tombs. The "pear shaped" dome is raised over a high drum with a crowning element in the shape of lotus petals containing rope-like mouldings above and below. The 44-m (144-ft) double dome is capped with a finial. The dome of Taj Mahal is



surrounded by four Chattris similar to that of Hindu *panchayatana* shrine. The idea probably inspired from the Hoshang Shah's Tomb, Mandu, which has been employed for the first time in the Islamic architecture. The cenotaph of Mumtaz Mahal is at the exact centre of the tomb chamber, beside whom lay the mortal remains of the husband king Shah Jahan. Placed on a rectangular platform, the cenotaphs are decorated with inlaid flower motifs (*pietra dura*). The upper cenotaphs are only illusory and the real grave is in the lower tomb chamber, a practice commonly adopted in imperial



Mughal mausoleums. The present garden is divided into four quadrants by two main walkways and each quadrant in turn sub divided into four sub-quadrants by narrow walkways, also famously termed as the "Chaar Bagh". The main walkways consisted of swallow canals containing a line of fountains, wherein the water was supplied through two Persian wheel lifts, run by bullocks in those days. The Mosque and *Mehman Khana* (*Jamaat Khana*) complex are built of sandstone in contrast to the marble mausoleum in their centre. The tank in front of the mosque is meant for ablution purposes whereas the tank on front of the Mehman Khana is just a replica of the former. The *Jamaat Khana* or *Mehman Khana* was built to maintain the sense of balance and symmetry which actuated the whole design of the Taj Mahal. The calligraphy comprises of *Quranic suras* and verses of mercy, the ninety-nine divine names. The size of the *Quranic verses* increases as the arch gets higher, creating the subtle optical illusion of a uniformly flowing script.



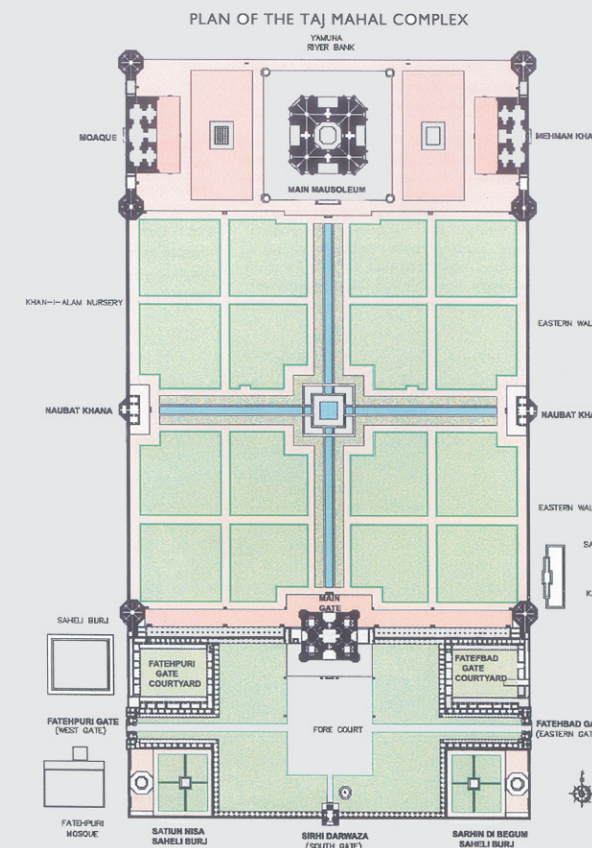
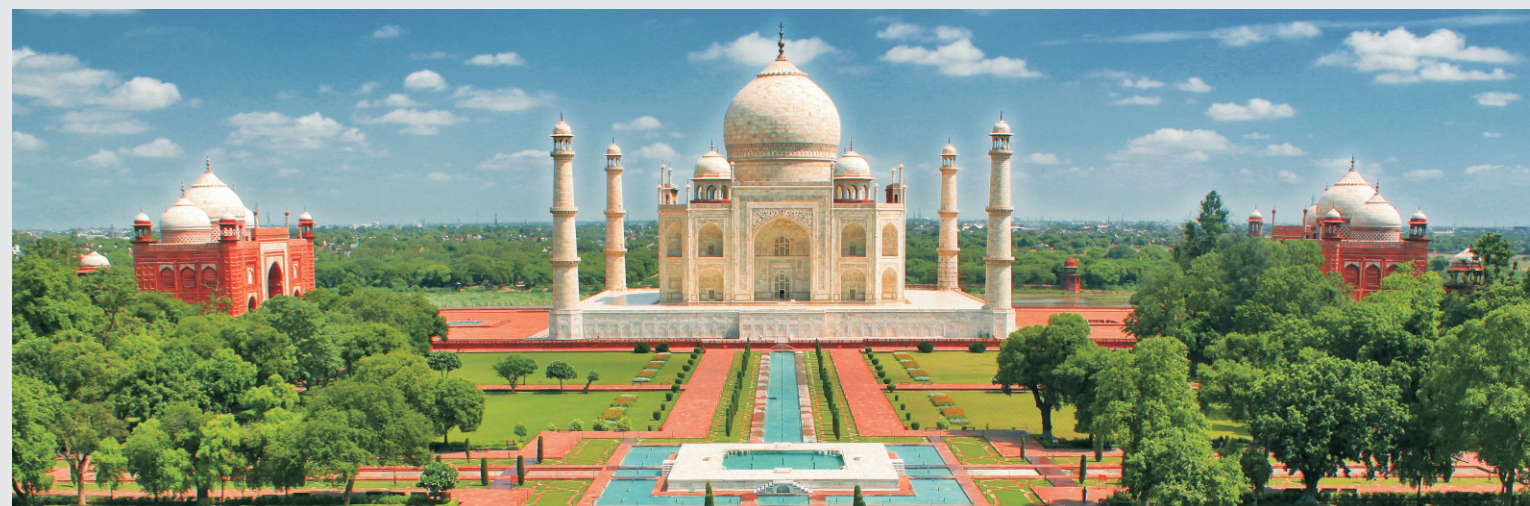
The size of the *Quranic verses* increases as the arch gets higher, creating the subtle optical illusion of a uniformly flowing script.



Surprising facts:

The Taj Mahal is higher than the famous Qutub Minar of Delhi (72.54) by about 2.44m. It's foundation is a miracle of hydraulic engineering of Shah Jahan's period. There were series of 12.19m deep wells with 2.74 m diameter full of teak wood bands and stonework and sturdy mortar. Taj Mahal is the heftiest structure on the banks of a river that has never sunk even to an inch. A significant point to note is that the river Yamuna, which has been shifting for miles in Delhi, is till this date beside this magnificent marble tomb. The altering visible appearance of the Taj mahal in the four phases of a diurnal period adds to its fascination.

Due to its outstanding universal value, it has been inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1983.



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Taj Mahal (Rauza-i-Munnawara) The Tomb of Glory



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