



Taj: A Story of Mughal India

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This powerful novel narrates the story of the Taj on two parallel levels. The first one tells the passionate love story of Shah Jahan and Arjumand. The second recounts the later years of Shah Jahan's reign, the building of the Taj Mahal and the bloody pursuit of the fabulous Peacock throne by his sons. Intertwined in the building is the story of Murthi, the Hindu master craftsman sent as a gift to the emperor to carve the famous marble jail around Arjumand's sarcophagus.

Murari has skilfully recreated the period against which the story is set, the sensual opulence of the palace, the grinding poverty of seventeenth century India, the vicissitudes of Shah Jahan's reign and the historical background of the conflict between men of different faiths.

Taj: A Story of Mughal India Details

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From Reader Review Taj: A Story of Mughal India for online ebook

Jewel says

While reading this book I kept thinking “This author have an ulterior motive!”

Because really, why would an Indian author write a book about one of the best architectural buildings not only in India but the world, and about a ruling family that ruled a vast empire through generations in India, and then just write everything that is bad about it.

I mean so they were exceedingly rich and corrupted and drank like a crazy (all day long) and cared only for their pleasures. So I ask when did they have the time to rule the empire, try to keep the peace, go on campaigns and keep all those people with different languages and religions under control, if all the emperor did was spend his days unsuccessfully trying to get a widow into his bed??

It's a historical fact (which this book was very lacking in) that they were rich and cared for their pleasure, but if the author wrote about the good points as well I would not have felt so irritated.

The book, which is divided in chapters, were the even numbered ones talk about the love story (past) and the odd numbered ones talk about the actual building of the Taj Mahal, was also divided into:

* Even numbered chapters that listed treasures, extravagance, pleasures and sometimes cruelty and totally useless events that they didn't make any sense expect add to the treasure. I wonder why would Arjumand be allowed to visit the empire's treasury, and with the son who turned traitor!? And why would a Muslim princess visit a Hindu Temple??! (well after googling it, I know why the author put that in the book)

* And then there are the odd numbered chapters where the extravagance and the time and people needed to build the Taj Mahal are listed and in between we see glimpses of emperor Shah Jahan who now after his wife died cares nothing for the empire and spends his days obsessing about the building.

The author has a good writing style, but I didn't like him.

The book was full of historical errors, especially with the dates.

And really all the romantic flowery talk, meant nothing because they were 15 and 12, so they just saw each other and baam their crazy for each other, and I'm supposed to believe that. It reminded me of the old badly translated books that I read a long time ago where the heroine faints after seeing the hero because her feeling were just overwhelming.

It's a historical fact that Shah Jahan and Arjumand were in Love, and the Taj Mahal still stands to prove it, but if anybody checks the history, they were really engaged for 5 years then they got married and fell in love, and still their story is really romantic.

There were other stuff in the book that got me all irritated, a fuss was made about Shah Jahan being married to a Persian princess and how he had to get rid of her first, well, dah, he can have more than one wife, and he actually did.

But, to be truthful, my biggest issue was how explicit the author was about “pleasures”, even if what he wrote was true I REALLY DON'T WANT TO READ ABOUT IT. (disgusting)

I wish somebody would just warn me about stuff like that in books, you know on the back cover or reviews “Warning: Explicit scenes where its not normal, read at your own risk”

And that just born baby that “chuckled with laughter” was just too creepy.

I found Indu Sundaresan books on the same period to be much more entertaining, I have really enjoyed them, (even though she got a few Islamic practices wrong).

Naomi Pereira says

Really takes you back in time to experience life as it was once lived in the 16th century in India during the Mughal reign. Great descriptive imagery of those times, poignant, beautiful & erotic. A love story is finely woven into the tapestry of the various lives where duty precedes all else, power is king and ultimately the fall from grace.

Vivek says

A fascinating fictionalized account of Shah Jahan, his love Arjumand and the making of the Taj. An easy read to understand the era without being too historical.

Rengganis Primadisa says

Mungkin seleraku yang aneh atau gimana, tapi ini buku terbaik yang pernah kubaca.

Awalnya aku gak suka baca buku sejarah kayak gini, tapi karena rekomendasi teman akhirnya aku baca buku ini dan WAU! Mungkin aku lebay atau gimana kali ya gak tau juga hahaha tapi pas baca bab 1, rasanya aku gak bisa nafas saking indah dan kerennya susunan kata-kata untuk deskripsi-in cinta pandangan pertama antara Shah Jahan dan Arjumand.

Cerita dan cara penyampaiannya emang bagus dari sananya. Tapi jarang banget ada novel terjemahan yang sebagus ini nerjemahinnya.

Nora|KnyguDama says

TIMERI N. MURARI “TADŽ MAHALIS”

Kaip aš g?riuosi Indija. Grei?iausiai, man tai pats ?domiausias žem?s kampilis planetoje. Viskas ten mane žavi – papro?iai, tradicijos, kult?ra, gyvenimo b?das, kalba, maistas, spalvos, muzika... Viskas kas indiška, man atrodo taip gražu, egzotiška, skanu. Taip taip, žinau aš ir apie visus siaubus tame krašte vykstan?ius, ir ntgi jie man ?dom?s. Esu ma?iusi zilionus film? apie Indij?, ir taip, net dienos metu paži?riu t? “Pažad?t?j?”

– kiek ten spalv? ir muzikos! Kiek man knyg? apie Indij? papuola ? rankas tiek visas ir skaitau – tiek romanus, tiek pažintines. B?tent tokiu keliu „Tadž Mahalis“ mano rankose ir atsid?r?.

Vis? pirma, tai aš tik?jausi jog istorijos centras ir bus Tadž Mahalis. Jo statyb? istorija, galb?t daug ?domi? fakt? ir mit? apie diding?j? pastat?. To buvo vos lašelis. Pagrindin?s istorijos fig?ros Ardžumand ir Šahdžahanas bei j? meil?s istorija, jei j? galima taip pavadinti. Šahdžahanas – turtingas princas kart? turguje pamil?s gražuol? Ardžumand. Ta pati meil?s str?l? peršov? ir j?. Princas nusprendžia t?vo paprašyti leidimo vesti mergin?, ta?iau pastarasis atšauna jog tai ne?manomas dalykas ir jo s?nus turi vesti kilming? pers? vardan šalies gerov?s. Abu jaunuoliai labai sunkiai išgyvena tok? sprendim?, ta?iau nepaklusti negali. Šahdžahanas veda pers?, o Ardžumand kasdien? skendi meil?s kan?iose. Ta?iau po keleri? met? princas nusprendžia vesti antr? kart? ir jo antr?ja žmona tampa Ardžumand. Didžiul? laim? juos aplanko pagaliau esant galimybei jiems b?ti kartu. Ta?iau pra?jus dar keliems metams laim? pradeda byr?ti. Smarkiai blog?ja Ardžumand sveikata – jai neišeina pagimdyti sveiko, gyvo vaiko.

Greta šios pasakojama ir Tadž Mahalio statyb? istorija. Pasakojama ji labai ne?domiai ir vangiai. Kažkas d?l kažkokio bokšteliu nuolat gin?ijasi ir niekaip negali priimti sprendimo. Tikriausiai vienintelis ?domus faktas šioje knygoje buvo tas, jog Šahdžahanas kupolo form? ?sak? padaryti toki? kaip Ardžumand kr?tis (tikriausiai visi ir taip žinote, kad šis statinys buvo didžiul?s meil?s paminklas). Bet tos meil?s istorijos aš ?ia visai nepama?iau... Jokios romantikos, ?rodym?, aukojim?si ar panaši? dalyk?. Tiesiog du žmon?s, kuriems pagaliau leido b?ti kartu, nuolat diskutuoja apie nesvarbius dalykus arba gailisi vienas kito. Na, nežianu.... Užtat ko ?ia pilna, tai vulgari? sekso scen?. Jos itin šlykš?ios, perd?tos ir netikroviškos. Kaip koks „50 spalvot? Indijos atspalvi?“. Toki? dalyk? visiškai nesitik?jau ir nenor?jau. Bet b?t? buv? malonu, jog leidykla nors menka užuomina b?t? ?sp?jusi apie tokius dalykus anotacijoje (tas „didinga meil?“ ant viršelio nesiskaito, nes tos scenos tikrai ne „didingos“ ir jokia meile net nekvepia). Nors knyga vadinasi „Tadž Mahalis“ nieko ten ?domaus apie j? n?ra. Ir šiaip, visa knyga blanki, ne?domi, l?ta ir nieko man nedav?.

Jei reikt? mano rekomendacij? apie geras „indiškas“ knygas, nedvejodama si?ly?iau „Trapi? pusiausvyr?“, „Bendravard?“, „Šantaram?“, „L?šnyn? milijonieri?“, „Šešis ?tariamuosius“. Ir mielai išklausysiu j?s? rekomendacijas!

Nandini Vishwanath says

I liked this book. It is historical fiction set in Mughal India. Made for a fascinating read. The story moves in 3 directions simultaneously. A young Shahjahan falling in love with Arjumand (Mumtaz Mahal), an older Shahjahan building his dream or obsession of a Taj Mahal and the story of a poor Hindu carver. The Hindu carver is a symbol of the way Hindus were treated during a predominantly Mughal era.

The hospitality of the famed Rajputs, the Aurangzeb angle - where the author has tried to discuss why Aurangzeb was the way he is thanks to lack of love and affection from his parents, Jahangir's exploits with women, the vast expanse and riches of the Mughal empire.

Some questions that this book raised in my mind:

1. Arjumand keeps getting pregnant thanks to Shahjahan's 'love' for her. He can't keep his hands off her mostly. There are times she is shown to be weak-willed and succumb to love making when she clearly knows her body can't take it. But mostly, it is Shahjahan's love for bodily pleasures that Arjumand can't say no to, due to her sheer love and devotion towards him. She suffers on accord of this. I wondered how things have changed over time in India. Women were like that, all forgiving and took risks with their health for the sake of their husband's joys then, and do so even now. What has changed, really?

2. An older Shahjahan's Delhi is filled with marble. The Hindu carver is asked to make a 'murti' of Goddess Durga using this - it's almost a secret because this king is trying to follow Akbar's policy of tolerance, however, isn't always strong enough to stand up to the Mullahs. Apart from that being a reflection of several Islamic countries today, I got thinking about whether North Indian temples use marble because of this reason, or is it just because there is marble in abundance in the Northern parts of the country?

3. This book was a trip down History textbooks for me and so, I did like it a lot!

Marcy says

If I could have given ten stars for Taj, I would have for this incredible novel! After having visited the Taj Mahal this summer, and learning about the Mughal empire, I adored reading this novel about Shah Jahan and his beloved, Arjumand. At the royal bazaar of Jahanigir, the emperor, son of Akbar, the greatest of Mughal emperors, the prince, Shah Jahan, Jahanigir's son, first gazed at Arjumand, and she gazed at him. They fell in love at first sight, and through many years of peace, love, war, and hate, their love never ebbed. This story is beautifully constructed - one chapter is about Shah Jahan's life with his beloved, the next chapter is about a father and son whose lives are dedicated to the discipline of stone, years later, helping to build Emperor Shah Jahan's Taj Mahal, a monument which encloses his empress' tomb. Arjumand died giving birth to her fourteenth child. Throughout their years together, they could not resist each other and loved each other with every fiber of their beings.

Shah Jahan writes, "To her I had never been a prince, nor was I an emperor now. I was her husband, her lover, my heart was still entwined with hers. Our love was trust; they were fused as if wrought of finest metal. I could not breathe beyond her presence; in it, the loneliness was dispelled."

There are many lines I underlined in this book that held the philosophies of war, peace, parenthood, dedication to one's art, betrayal, and toleration. The descriptions of Shah Jahan's and Arjumand's lovemaking also left me breathless. Here is the description of the Taj Mahal that is as accurate as my own eyes saw this beautiful structure:

"The pure white marble blazed in ethereal beauty. It was as if a beautiful woman gazed into a mirror which faithfully returned every perfection. There seemed to be in that reflection an inner light that turned the surrounding water as dark as night. They did not lift their eyes to the building itself-the dome like a gigantic pearl afloat in the night sky-they looked only upon its image. It filled the heart and eye to abundance, to silence, to prayer. When they finally lifted their gaze, the tomb looked melancholy in the cold light, seemed to radiate, through the mantle of splendour, and eternal sadness."

Dian April says

Aku baca versi terjemahan dlm bhs Indonesia. Novel sejarah menurutku. Bagus. Ada sisi nyata yang dibahasakan kembali dan ada sisi fiksi bisa jadi sebenarnya nyata. Sisi gelap dan terang dibalik pembangunan Taj.

Ada kisah cintanya. Dan itu nyata. Nggak picisan, tapi mengharukan. Romantis. Hehe...

Sekaligus tragis. Pergulatan memperebutkan kekuasaan sampai harus mengorbankan nyawa saudara kandung sendiri.

Adam says

When his queen Arjumand Banu-Mumtaz-i-Mahal-the Chosen One of the Palace-died, Shah Jahan wanted to build a monument that was the image of his perfect love for her. For twenty-two years, twenty thousand men laboured day and night to fulfill the emperor's obsession. The result was the Taj Mahal, a marble mausoleum lined with gold, silver and precious jewels.

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Hiba says

Extraordinary! Tantalizing! Intimidating!

A must read for everyone!

The lingering love story on the sidelines between Shah Jehan and Arjumand Banu.

The smouldering sensuality, the riches of the Mughal Empire. The height of a dynasty so bursting with splendour that one never tires reading about it.

The towering yet secretive Taj Mahal, a true page turner and awesome read.

Gazala says

This is one of those historic romance took me a very long time to read. However , it totally makes to the favorites category without much thought.

The intricacies with which the author has woven this saga using facts from the past is praiseworthy.

The journey of love set amidst politics , rebellion and high profile drama , this love is very close to my heart for more reasons than I can mention.

Rosemary says

Fascinating story about a spectacular era in Indian history. Main reasons I did not give it more stars: typos in the text. Needed better proof reading. That is minor. More major is the multitude of voices that tell the story. Sometimes I was not sure who was talking. The book jumps back and forth, telling in bits and pieces the story of the lives of Shah Jahan and his empress, Arjumand Banu, as well as the story of the building of the Taj Mahal, after Arjumand's death in childbirth, following her 14th pregnancy. The seeds of religious discord in India were sewn during the time of building of the Taj Mahal, and the telling of this part of the tale is one

of the most interesting aspects of the book. The book is published in India, and I ordered it from there. Hard to get hold of in the States.

Yuka says

Bought from a book store in Varanasi, India in 2016.
Finally finished it after SCAs in San Francisco two years later!

res says

idealnya 2,5 bintang...Sebuah proporsi yang cukup besar terangkum dalam sebuah peribahasa Mughal : 'TAKTYA TAKHTA?' - Takhta atau Makam?

Ambisi dan kekuasaan. Karma yang berulang saat saudara tega membunuh saudara sekandungnya demi untuk meraih jabatan yang sangat melenakan - SULTAN. Dan dilanggarlah sudah hukum Timurid yang diciptakan leluhur mereka : 'Jangan sakiti saudaramu , meskipun mereka mungkin layak mendapatkannya' !

Gambaran tentang perang , baik itu perilaku primitif agresif-defensif yang kerap menyertainya - memperkaya cerita buku ini. Dengan hati-hati pengarang tidak terlalu tajam mengkritisi perbedaan kebudayaan , kepentingan & cara pandang (idealisme) antara Islam , Hindu dan (sedikit)kristen.

Plot yang dipisahkan dalam selang waktu beberapa tahun yang berbeda dengan penekanan pemilihan pada bab genap dan bab ganjil , tak urung menginterupsi kenikmatan membaca. Namun , bergembiralah karena dapat diakhiri dengan epilog yang baik. Meninggalkan Mumtaz-i-mahal (yang kemudian lebih populer dengan Taj Mahal)sebagai sebuah bangunan indah karya manusia yang tak lekang dimakan zaman.

Berikut untaian manis kata yang ditemukan pada sisi depan cover dari seorang penyair , filsuf dan seniman - Rabindranath Tigore :

'Hanya membiarkan setetes air mata ini jatuh. Taj Mahal, berkilau tanpa noda , menerangi kelokan waktu untuk selamanya....

O Sultan ! Kau ingin menghentikan waktu dengan keajaiban keindahan dan menjalin rangkaian bunga yang akan menautkan kematian tak terbentuk dengan bentuk keabadian !

Disini , di bumi yang berdebu , makam itu merengkuh kematian dengan lembut , dan menyelubunginya dengan serpihan kenangan.'

Jennifer James says

I really cared about the characters and cried at the death of Arjumand, the woman whom the Taj was built to memorialize. However, there were numerous distracting grammatical errors and at least one historical error. Per the Encyclopaedia Britannica Online and Wikipedia, Arjumand was not Shah Jahan's only wife, but his

third. Overall, I recommend it but not enthusiastically.
