left their marks on the sandstone flooring, both symbols and names, indicating that over 400 teams were employed at the site (Koch 2006). The Taj is built of brick and faced with red sandstone, white marble, and polished lime plaster. The red sandstone from Fatehpur Sikri (40 km from Agra) and white marble from Makrana in Rajasthan (about 400 km away) were hauled on carts drawn by bullocks or buffaloes. The building materials were hoisted over mud ramps, some said to be close to 2 miles in their length. Twenty-eight types of precious and semi-precious stones inlaid into the white marble included agate from Yemen, turquoise from Tibet, lapis lazuli from Afghanistan, amethyst from Persia, sapphire from Ceylon, carnelian from Arabia, oynx from Deccan, and garnets from Bundelkhand (Baig and Mehrotra 2017). Polished plaster (*chuna*), less expensive than marble, was used in upper storey ambulatory rooms and their domes, giving them a white shining surface (Koch 2006). The translucent marble reflects atmospheric light, appearing pinkish in mornings, white at high noon, and orangish at dusk, earning the mausoleum the name "illumined tomb" (*rauza-i-munavvara*) from contemporary Mughal sources (Begley and Desai 1989).

International Perspectives

Visual and textual representations by European travelers from the seventeenth century onwards brought worldwide fame to the Taj. As Pal (1989) points out, the Taj's fame rests upon paintings and photographs, books and essays by European visitors, largely responsible for creating the romance of the Taj by the last quarter of the eighteenth century. It was recognized as the epitome of Mughal architectural style giving it historical value befitting a monument. The ideology of conservation derived from the European cult of the monument in the nineteenth century when appreciation of their historic value led to their legal protection (Riegl 1982). European representations were widely circulated, building its extensive reputation, and spurring efforts for preservation. The "picturesque" aesthetic guided landscape restoration situating the historic monument in an archaeological park.

Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, declared the Taj to be national monument and took a personal interest in its conservation between 1900 and 1908. He had the Archaeological Survey of India replace missing or deteriorated marble facings, rebuild a wall and arcade in the entry forecourt, and install a new lamp above the sarcophagi that he ordered from Cairo (Tillotson 2008). A small museum was established in the main entrance gateway, but was later shifted to the garden building in the west. The framing of Taj by thick vegetation was weakened with the replacement of the cypress with *ashoka* trees and fruit trees with flowering shrubs and lawn (Bowe 2007; Herbert 2005, 2012). The remnant Mughal garden was now transformed into a colonial version of the English landscape garden.

The Taj Mahal, voted by some 30 million people via internet and mobile phones in 2007 as one of "new Seven Wonders of the World," is now the subject of a global visual culture that allows image to dominate over meaning. The frontal view of the Taj Mahal has been reproduced ad infinitum in print and digital media, and has prevailed over other views. It represents the building as a flattened image, with or without the south garden, with no depth or shadows, always appearing to be taken at high noon. In non-photographic reproductions its visage is reduced to only a few essential lines to communicate its silhouette. In medallions, jewelry, and china, and in small marble models, the Taj is reduced to an item of display, part of the collection of curiosities. As a logo and brand name for selling tea, food items, and fashion accessories, its iconic image lends itself readily to commercial use (Pal 1989).

The Taj became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983 and its popularity as a tourist destination has continued to rise so much so that a visit to India is considered incomplete without seeing the marble mausoleum and it remains a must see for domestic tourists as well. It gets between seven and eight million visitors annually out of which less than a million are from outside India (https://www.tajmahal.gov.in/contact-us.aspx). The sheer number of visitors in the peak tourist season