

Rising Yamuna good for Taj Mahal: Conservationists

Heritage conservationists here disagree with the district administration's concern over the rising waters of the Yamuna river posing a threat to the Taj Mahal and other Mughal era monuments. In fact, they say, the rising waters could be good for the monuments.

Surendra Sharma, Braj Mandal Heritage Conservation Society president, said the historical buildings along the river bank in Agra had seen many floods in the past over 400 years.

'This time too the water level is not likely to rise alarmingly. In fact, the rising water level is good for the monuments.

'The original design and landscaping of the Taj Mahal shows that the river Yamuna was in full flow, touching the rear wall of the Taj built on the foundation of deep wells which should be in close contact with water.

'In the past years, so many historians and conservationists have demanded that the river be filled with water for the security of the Taj Mahal,' Sharma told IANS.

R. Nath, a Mughal historian, has been maintaining that the river should always be full of water as per the original design of the Taj which included the Yamuna as its integral part.

The rising water level could pose a threat to the Taj Mahal and other Mughal monuments, Agra's District Magistrate Anil Kumar had told mediapersons Wednesday.

This led to widespread concern and alarm.

But Amit Mukherjea, head of the history department at St John's College here, said the Yamuna was almost like a sea here during Babur's time, a few centuries back.

'It flowed full hitting the rear of the Taj, maintaining the moisture level to preserve its foundation. It was because of the full Yamuna that half a dozen buildings stand majestically till this day,' he said.

Agreeing with Mukherjea, historian R.C. Sharma told IANS: 'Yamuna without water is a much bigger threat than Yamuna in spate which is what the Mughal architects always wanted and that was the reason why they chose this particular site for the Taj.'

'See any old picture of the Taj Mahal and you'll find the river full to the brim. Now they have thoughtlessly developed a park between the Taj foundation and the river, distancing the water by a good 50 metres. These buildings standing on solid masonry and very scientific layout and designs can face any number of floods unlike today's structures,' he added.

Brij Khandelwal (© IANS / India eNews)