



MUGHAL EMPIRE OF INDIA AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION IN ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract

Mughal architecture, an amalgam of Islamic, Persian, Turkish and Indian architecture, is the distinctive style developed by the Mughals in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries in what is now India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. It is symmetrical and decorative in style. The Mughal dynasty was established after the victory of Babur at Panipat in 1526 (the Battle of Panipat). During his five-year reign, Babur took considerable interest in erecting buildings, though few have survived. The influence of Mughal Architecture lives on in Afghan, Pakistani and Indian architecture today, but few like chaharbagh or four gardens still exist.



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Introduction

The **Mughal Empire** (Persian: امپراتوری مغل، *Imperatory-e Moghuly-e Hind*, self-designation: گورکانیان, *Gurkaniyan*; ^[3]Urdu: مغل سلطنت, *Moghly-e Soltanat*), or **Mogul** (also **Moghul**) **Empire** in traditional English usage, was an imperial power in the Indian subcontinent from about 1526 to 1757 (though it lingered for another century). The Mughal emperors were Muslims and direct descendants of Genghis Khan through Chagatai Khan and Timur. At the height of their power in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, they controlled most of the subcontinent—extending from Bengal in the east to Balochistan in the west, Kashmir in the north to the Kaveri basin in the south. Its population at that time has been estimated as between 110 and 150 million, over a territory of more than 3.2 million square kilometres (1.2 million square miles).

The "classic period" of the empire started in 1556 with the accession of Akbar the Great. Under his rule, India enjoyed much cultural and economic progress as well as religious harmony. Akbar was a successful warrior; he also forged martial alliances with several Hindu Rajput kingdoms. Some Rajput kingdoms continued to pose a significant threat to Mughal dominance of northwestern India, but they were subdued by Akbar.

Literature Review

Mughal empire is a fascinating period of Indian History. This is because, the mughal history is so recent so as to blend with the issues of the current times. Many of the monuments of Mughal period are still in use, whether it be mosques, mausoleum or forts. This essay is a brief summary of the Mughal empire from the historical and trade perspective. Babur founded the Mughal Empire after defeating Ibrahim Shah Lodi at the first battle of Panipat in 1526. Babur died in 1530, leaving an unsettled political situation. His son and successor, Humayun could not hold on to the newly created rule and lost in a series of battles to Sher Shah Suri. Consequently, 1540 onwards, Humayun led a life of refugee, much of this period in the Court of Persian Safavid ruler. It was his son and successor Akbar who then only 14 years old, finally regained the control of Hindustan after winning the second battle of Panipat in 1556.

Objectives

The main aim of this study is to provide a view of key themes of Mughal architecture within a loose chronological frame work. Buildings, architectural complexes and also formal gardens are studied through a range of methodologies: architectural surveying, formal analysis and comparison, and an examination in light of their cultural, political and socio-economic context. Themes include patronage (which involves also issue of gender), the question of the architects, landownership of the nobility, urban planning and the relationship between form, function and symbolic meaning. Mughal court culture is addressed as well as the artistic interactions with other Islamic courts and Europe.

Hypotheses

India in the 16th century presented a fragmented picture of rulers, both Muslim and Hindu, who lacked concern for their subjects and failed to create a common body of laws or institutions. Outside developments also played a role in shaping events. The circumnavigation of Africa by the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama in 1498 allowed Europeans to challenge Arab control of the trading routes between Europe and Asia. In Central Asia and Afghanistan, shifts in power pushed Babur of Ferghana (in present-day Uzbekistan) southward, first to Kabul and then to India. The dynasty he founded endured for more than three centuries Mughal rule stabilised during the time of Akbar. By that time, Mughals were no longer the strangers, but they had adopted India as their home. The policy of *sulh i kul* adopted by Akbar became visible in the art forms patronised by the Mughal emperors. This was visible in paintings, music and architecture. Although, Babur and

Humayun would have followed a liberal policy in such matters, they did not live long, and therefore could not give shape to durable policy. The interregnum of Sher Shah had destabilised the Mughal rule in the period prior to Akbar. Akbar by giving shape to a durable policy of tolerance promoted development and intermingling of art forms, which hitherto would be considered heretic. His patronage also removed the stigma of sacrilege attached to arts like painting under the orthodox Islamic laws as followed by some of the rulers of the Sultanate.

Timeline for the Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire — spanning over three hundred years from 1526-1858 — is responsible for India's greatest Islamic architecture. The greatest period of building was concentrated in the first half of the Empire's reign, under a small group of inspired leaders:

Babur. Ruled 1526-1530. Founder of the Mughal Empire. See the next section for more details on Babur.

Humayun. Ruled 1530-43 and 1555-56.

Akbar. Ruled 1556-1605. A prodigious builder, Emperor Akbar played an instrumental role in shaping the Mughal architectural style.

Jahangir. Ruled 1605-1627. Architecture under Emperor Jahangir served as an important bridge between Akbar and Shah Jahan.

Shah Jahan. Ruled 1628-1658. Emperor Shah Jahan brought Mughal architecture to its highest levels of refinement and expression; his reign is seen as comprising the Classic period.

Aurangzeb. Ruled 1658-1707.

The end of Aurangzeb's reign marks the beginning of the **Late Mughal Period**, during which the Empire went into a steep decline, ending in the deposition of the last emperor by the British in 1858.

The Mughal Economy and Society

India had a ruling class whose extravagant life-style surpassed that of the European aristocracy. It had an industrial sector producing luxury goods which Europe could not match, but this was achieved by subjecting the population to a high degree of exploitation. Living standards of ordinary people were lower than those of European peasants and their life expectation was shorter. The high degree of exploitation was possible because of the passivity of village society. The social mechanism which kept the villages passive also

lowered labour productivity, and provided little incentive to technical progress or productive investment.

Moghul India had a good deal to impress Western visitors. From the time of Akbar to Shah Jehan the court was one of the most brilliant in the world. It was cosmopolitan and religiously tolerant. Literature and painting flourished and there were magnificent palaces and mosques at Agra, Delhi, Fatehpur Sikri, and Lahore. The nobility lived in walled castles with harems, gardens, fountains and large retinues of slaves and servants. They had huge wardrobes of splendid garments in fine cotton and silk. In order to cater for their needs, a number of handicraft industries produced high quality cotton textiles, silks, jewellery, decorative swords and weapons. These luxury industries grew up in urban centres. The urban population was bigger in the Muslim period than it had been under Hindu rulers, for caste restrictions had previously kept artisans out of towns (2). Most urban workers were Muslims. The main market for these urban products was domestic, but a significant portion of textile output was exported to Europe and South-East Asia. Other export items were saltpetre, indigo, sugar, opium and ginger. Europeans had great difficulty in finding products to exchange for Indian goods. They were able to export a few woollen goods and some metals, but the only things the Indians really wanted in exchange and which were worth the cost of transporting so far were precious metals. There was, therefore, a constant flow of silver and gold to India, which absorbed a good deal of the bullion produced by the Spaniards in the New World. It was this phenomenon which most impressed and disturbed Europeans in their relations with India.

Conclusion

The advent of the Mughals brought a new era in architecture. The synthesis of style which began earlier reached its zenith during this time. The architecture of Mughal style started during Akbar's rule. The first building of this rule was Humayun's Tomb at Delhi. In this magnificent building red stone was used. It has a main gateway and the tomb is placed in the midst of a garden. Many consider it a precursor of the Taj Mahal. Akbar built forts at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. The Bulund Darwaza reflects the grandeur of the mighty Mughal empire. This building was made following Akbar's victory over Gujarat. The Arch of the Bul and Darwaja is about 41 m high and is perhaps the most imposing gateway in the world. The tomb of Salim Chishti, Palace of Jodha Bai, Ibadat Khana, Birbal's House and other buildings at Fatehpur Sikri reflect a synthesis of Persian and Indian elements. During the reign of Jehangir, Akbar's Mausoleum was constructed at Sikandra near Agra. He built the beautiful tomb of Itimad-ud-daula which was built entirely of marble. Shahjahan was the greatest builder amongst the Mughals. He used marble extensively. Decorative design in inlay work, (*called pietraduro*) beautiful arches and minarets were the features of his buildings. The Red Fort and Jama Masjid of Delhi and above all the Taj Mahal are some of the buildings built by Shahjahan. The Taj Mahal, the tomb of Shahjahan's wife, is built in

marble and reflects all the architectural features that were developed during the Mughal period. It has a central dome, four elegant minarats, gateway, inlay work and gardens surrounding the main building. The Mughal style of architecture had a profound influence on the buildings of the later period. The buildings showed a strong influence of the ancient Indian style and had courtyards and pillars. For the first time in the architecture of this style living beings- elephants, lions, peacocks and other birds were sculptured in the brackets.

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