



Taj Mahal was built in Agra by Shah Jahan as a mausoleum for his deceased wife Mumtaz Mahal. Taj Mahal was the apogee of the evolutionary architectural process in medieval India.

The sublimity of the building comes from its orderly, simple plan and elevation, amazingly perfect proportions or symmetry, the ethereal quality marble has lent to it, the perfect setting of *bagh* and river and the pure outline of the tomb silhouetted against the sky. The patina the Taj has lends it a different hue at various times of day and night.

The Taj complex is entered through a monumental red sandstone gateway the opening arch of which beautifully frames the mausoleum. The tomb is laid out in a Chahar Bagh, criss-crossed with paths and water courses, interspersed with pools and fountains. The structure is placed on the northern extremity of the *bagh* instead of the middle to take advantage of the river bank.



A straight path through the *bagh* reaches the plinth of the tomb from where is accessed the floor terrace of the edifice. At the corners of the terrace stand four tall, tapering minarets, one hundred and thirty-two feet high. The main body of the building is topped with a drum and dome and four cupolas forming a beautiful skyline. The plinth, the walls of the structure and the drum-dome are in perfect proportion to one another. Towards the west of the white marble-faced tomb lies a red sandstone mosque and a similar construction in the east to maintain balance. Marble for the building was quarried from the Makrana mines in Rajasthan and this white edifice is contrasted with the red sandstone of the surrounding structures.

The tomb structure is a square with chamfers forming eight sides, recessed with deep arches. This structural stylisation produces in the elevation of the building a variety of contrasting planes and shade and solids and voids effects. All sides of the building, the twin elevations of floor to roof and roof to pinnacle, atop the foliated crest of the dome, measure 186 feet each.

The interior arrangements of the mausoleum consist of a crypt below and a vaulted, octagonal tomb chamber above, with a room at each angle, all connected with corridors. Light to every part of the building is obtained by means of carved and perforated *jalis*, set in the arched recesses of the interior. The ceiling is as high as the façade creating a void with the help of a double dome.

Four types of embellishments have been used with great effect for the interior and exterior surfaces of the Taj Mahal. These are stone carvings in high and low relief on the walls, the delicate carving of marble into *jalis* and graceful volutes (spiral ornament on the pillar), and the creation of arabesques with *pietra dura* (yellow marble, jade and jasper) on walls and tombstones and geometric designs with tessellation. Lastly, the art of calligraphy is used with the inlay of jasper in white marble to write Quranic verses. Calligraphy provided a decorative element on the walls and a continuous connection with the Almighty.





## GOL GUMBAD





Gumbad is situated in Bijapur in the Bijapur District of Karnataka. It is the mausoleum of Muhammad Adil Shah (1626–1656), the seventh Sultan of the Adil Shahi Dynasty of Bijapur (1489–1686). Built by the ruler himself, it is a striking edifice in spite of being unfinished. The tomb is a complex of buildings such as a gateway, a *Naqqar Khana*, a mosque and a *sarai* located within a large-walled garden.

The Gumbad is a monumental square building topped with a circular drum over which rests a majestic dome, giving the building its nomenclature. It is built of dark gray basalt and decorated plasterwork. Each wall of the tomb is one hundred and thirty-five feet long and one hundred and ten feet high and ten feet thick. With the drum and the dome, the building rises to a height of over two hundred feet. The tomb has only one square chamber and the dome, with a diameter of one hundred and twenty-five feet, it covers an uninterrupted floor space of 18,337 square feet, the second largest in the world.

The tomb chamber contains the burial place of the Sultan, his wives and other relatives, while their real graves lie perpendicularly below in a vault, accessed by stairs. The hemispherical masonry dome over a square base was constructed with the help of pendentives. These pendentives not only lent shape to the dome but also transferred its weight to the walls below. New vaulting systems consisting of arch-nets or stellate forms in squinches were created to cover angles formed by intersecting arches.

The building has an amazing acoustical system. Along the drum of the dome there is a whispering gallery where sounds get magnified and echoed many times over.

At the four corners of the building are seven-storeyed octagonal spires or minaret-like towers. These towers house staircases leading to the top dome. The drum of the dome is decorated with foliation. A heavily bracketed cornice resting on corbels is a distinctive feature of the facade.

Gol Gumbad is a fine convergence of many styles located in medieval India. Monumentality, majesty and grandeur, integral aspects of the architectural experience in India, are associated with buildings of Bijapur. While its structural particularities of dome, arches, geometric proportions and load bearing techniques suggest Timurid and Persian styles, it is made of local material and is decorated with surface embellishments popular in the Deccan. Four towers at the corners are reminiscent of turrets attached to mosques such as Qila-i Kuhna Masjid and the Purana Qila in Delhi.



*Drum of the Dome*



*Whisper Gallery*



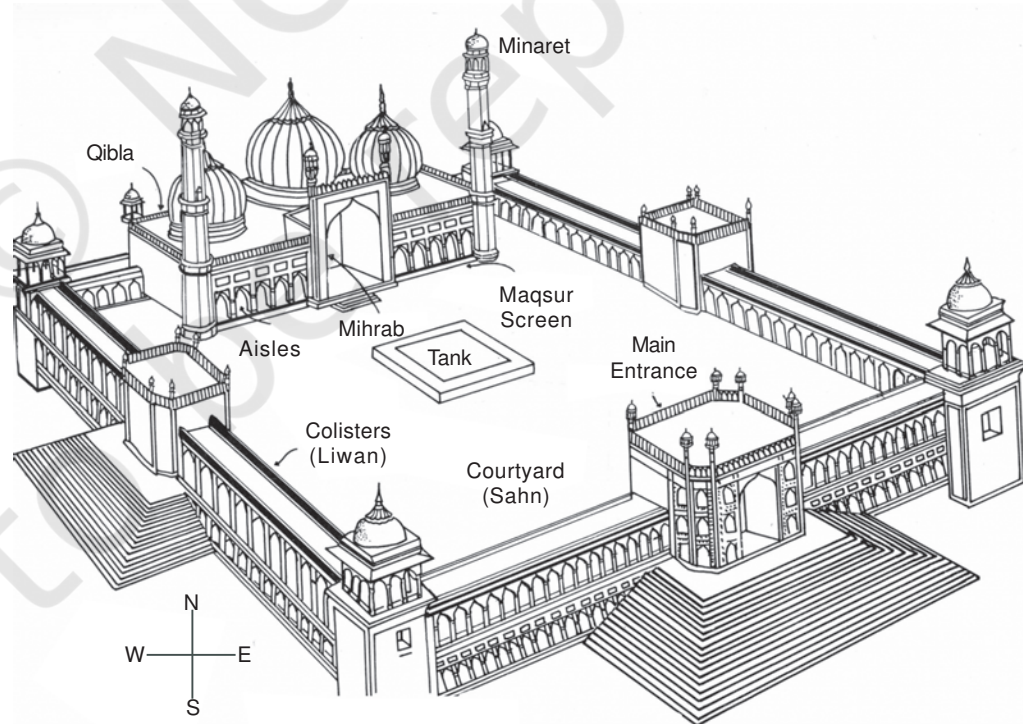


Jama Masjid, Delhi

### JAMA MASJID

Large mosques, spanning huge spaces, also dotted the landscape of the Indian sub-continent in medieval times. Congregational prayers were held here every Friday afternoon which required the presence of a minimum of forty Muslim male adults. At the time of prayers (on Fridays) a *Khutba* was read out in the name of the ruler and his laws for the realm were also read out. In medieval times, a city had one Jama Masjid, which along with its immediate surroundings became the

focus of the lives of the people, both Muslim and non-Muslim. This happened because a lot of commercial and cultural exchanges were concentrated here besides religious and indirect political activity. Generally, such a mosque was large with an open courtyard, surrounded on three sides by cloisters and the *Qibla Liwan* in the west. It was here that the *mihrab* and the *mimbar* for the *Imam* were located. People faced the *mihrab* while offering prayers as it indicated the direction of the *Kaaba* in Mecca.

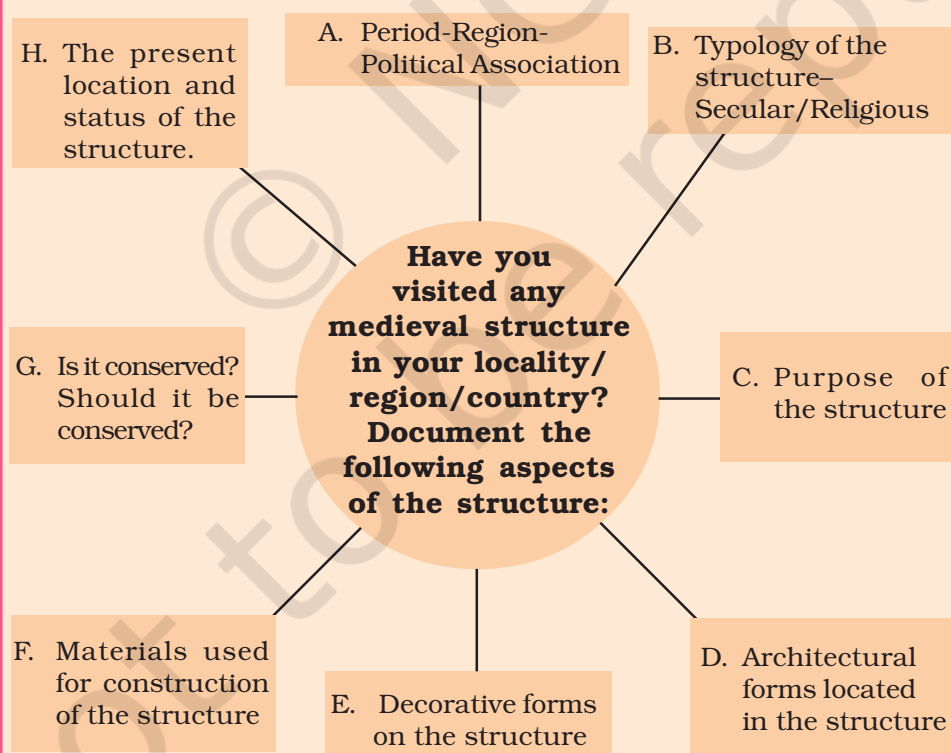


Plan of Jama Masjid

## EXERCISE

1. What do you understand by the term 'Indo-Islamic' or 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture? Can you think of another nomenclature? How did this architecture evolve in India?
2. What types of buildings were added in India in the thirteenth century?
3. Name four styles of Indo-Islamic architecture.
4. What was the significance of a fort in medieval India? What were the strategic devices adopted in the construction of forts to confuse or defeat the enemy?
5. Which forms of secular architecture evolved during medieval times? What significance did these buildings have in the socio-cultural lives of contemporary people?
6. How does Mandu showcase the fact that humans adapt to their environment?
7. In spite of being unfinished how does Gol Gumbad symbolise the grandeur and majesty of Indo-Islamic architecture?
8. Which are the places where the dead are buried? How do these differ from each other?
9. Why is the word 'perfection' associated with the Taj Mahal?

## PROJECT





## GLOSSARY

Agate	A fine-grained variegated chalcedony, its colours arranged in stripes, blended in clouds, or showing moss like forms
<i>Amalaka</i>	Ribbed, lenticular or globoid part resembling the <i>amala</i> (Indian gooseberry fruit) crowning the top of the North Indian style <i>shikhara</i>
<i>Anda</i>	Semi-circular structure typically used for Buddhist <i>stupa</i>
Arabesque	An ornamental design consisting of intertwined flowing lines, leaves and flowers, a feature of the Indo-Islamic architecture
<i>Ardhmandap</i>	Semi-hall in front of <i>garbhagriha</i> of the temple
<i>Ashtadikpalas</i>	Guardians of the eight directions
<i>Ayudhas</i>	Weapons
Batter	Slope in the wall
Bodhisattva	In Buddhism, Bodhisattva refers to the previous births of Gautam Buddha
Bosses	Circular embossed decorations, usually in stone of contrasting colours located on either side of an arch and within the spandrels
Buddhism	A religion originated in the sixteenth century BCE with the preachings of Buddha
Burin	A pointed tool of flint or stone with a transverse edge made by the removal of one or more flakes. Used for working bone, antler and ivory, and, perhaps, for engraving
CE	Common Era, replacing AD or Anno Domini (Era of the Lord)
Calligraphy	The art of producing decorative handwriting
<i>Caturasra</i>	Square
<i>Chhatra</i>	Umbrella-like structure on top of the <i>stupa</i>
<i>Chhatri</i>	Cupola resting on four pillars with a dome or pyramid-shaped roof
<i>Chahar Bagh</i>	A square, walled garden divided into four by intersecting water channels
<i>Chaitya Arch</i>	Semi-circular arch with pointed tip in the centre towards the top
<i>Chaitya</i>	Place of congregation and worship
<i>Chakra</i>	Wheel, a symbol used for Buddha's first sermon at Sarnath
Chamfer	To cut off the edge or corner, thereby, increasing the number of sides



Chert	A flint-like material, usually black or dark brown in colour. Although it has a conchoidal fracture like flint it is not so fine-textured
Chevron Patterning	V-shaped patterns
Corbel	The stone or wooden bracket laid horizontally to support a cornice or an arch
Cornice	A moulded roof-line
Crystal	A high quality, clear, colourless glass or an object, especially a vessel or ornament, made of such glass
Dado panel	Lower part of the interior wall when it is finished differently from the rest of the wall. Some excellent examples are Hoyasal temples of Halebid, Jamali Kamali tomb in Mehrauli and Turkish Sultan's palace in Fatehpur Sikri, Agra
Dargah	Shrine of a Sufi saint, where the saint's grave called <i>mazar</i> is located
Dhammachakrapravartan	First sermon by Buddha at Sarnath near Varanasi
Dravid	Normally used for people, culture, language and architectural style of South India
Dressed stone	Stone which is cut to size and polished
Encaustic tile work	Inlay in ceramics
Faience	Blue-coloured artificial glass-like material. Faience was used in a variety of ornaments and pieces of jewellery
Gahapati	Big land-owner or big farmer involved in farming and trade
Garbhagriha	Sanctum sanctorum
Gopuram	Main gateway; the storeyed structure over the entrance or entrances through the enclosing walls to the premises of a temple
Harmika	Small square fencing atop the <i>anda</i> or semi-circular dome of stupa
Imam	The person who leads a Muslim congregation in prayers. Over a passage of time, this position became hereditary
Intaglio	The process of cutting a design into the surface of a small hard stone or gem
Jagmohan	Rectangular or square hall in front of a sanctuary or main temple — a term used for temple architecture of Odisha
Jainism	One of the most ancient religions, it is a path of victory ( <i>jina</i> ) over life's stream of rebirths through ethical and spiritual practices.







<i>Jali</i>	Ornamental, perforated lattice screens with arabesques, star motifs and other geometric designs such as pentagons, hexagons, octagons and circles
<i>Jasper</i>	A variety of quartz that may be red, yellow or brown; long used for jewellery and ornamentation
<i>Jataka</i>	Stories of the previous births of Buddha
<i>Jati</i>	Caste
<i>Kalash</i>	Wide-mouthed pot; ornamental pot-design decorating the <i>shikhara</i> of a temple
<i>Keystone</i>	A central stone at the summit of an arch
<i>Kos minar</i>	Distance marker or milestone in the shape and size of a tower
<i>Kuta</i>	A shrine of square plan
<i>Lapis lazuli</i>	A rich blue semi-precious stone. The main source in the ancient world was the mountains of Badakshan, northern Afghanistan, from where it was traded widely. Lapis lazuli was used as inlay in ornaments, jewellery, seals, etc.
<i>Linga</i>	Phallus, the form in which Lord Shiva is being worshipped
<i>Mahamandapa</i>	Big hall in the temple
<i>Mahaparinibban</i>	Death of Lord Buddha — liberating him from the cycle of life and death
<i>Mandap</i>	Hall
<i>Maqbara</i>	Mausoleum or tomb
<i>Medallion</i>	Circular discs in the spandrels of arches decorated with motifs or calligraphy
<i>Mihrab</i>	Prayer niche indicating the direction of Mecca
<i>Mimbar</i>	Stepped pulpit in the Jama Masjid or Friday mosque from where the <i>Khutba</i> was read
<i>Mukhlinga</i>	Phallus with face
<i>Multiple foliations</i>	Many curves in an arch
<i>Mural</i>	Paintings made on the walls of caves, buildings or temples in Fresco or any other style
<i>Nagara</i>	North Indian style temple architecture
<i>Naqqar khana</i>	Drum house from where ceremonial music was played which was usually situated over the gate. It was a popular feature in Mughal palace-complexes
<i>Natyamandapa or Rangmandapa</i>	Dancing hall in front part of the temple
<i>Panchayatana</i>	Main temple surrounded by four sub-shrines in each corner



Pendentive	A triangular bracket in the angle of two walls, connecting the base of the dome to its supporting arches
Phamsana	A buildings/ temple which tends to be broader and shorter than Latina type
Pietra-dura	Pictorial mosaic work using semi-precious stones. Found on walls, cenotaphs and marble <i>jalis</i> in the Taj Mahal
Polychrome	An object or a work composed of or decorated in many colours
<i>Pradakshina</i>	Circumambulation
<i>Qibla Liwan</i>	The wall of the mosque in the direction of Mecca
Qila-i Kuhna Masjid	Built by Humayun or Sher Shah between 1530 and 1545, it is located inside Purana Qila in Delhi
Quartz	A variety of stone found in many parts of the world and variously used for toolmaking and in ceremonial contexts. Varieties of quartz include agate, chalcedony, chert, flint, opal and rock crystal
<i>Rekhapsad</i> or Latina	This type of temple has square <i>shikhar</i> at the base and its walls curve slowly inward towards the top
<i>Rupkar</i> /Shilpi	Artisan
<i>Sabha Mandapa</i>	Assembly hall
Saracenic	A style of architecture popular with Muslims in West Asia particularly from the eleventh to the fourteenth century
<i>Sarai</i>	<i>Dharamshala</i> or a traveller's lodge
<i>Shala ayatasara</i>	Elliptical
<i>Shikhar</i>	Superstructure above the <i>garbhagriha</i> in the north Indian style of temple
<i>Shilpa</i> texts	Ancient Indian texts/manuals describing the elements and principles of art and architecture to be practised by artists
<i>Shraman</i>	A Buddhist or Jain sect, whose followers used to wander from place to place
Sovereignty	The authority of a ruler/state to govern himself/itself absolutely independently
Spandrels	The almost triangular space between two sides of the outer curves of an arch and a rectangular enclosure
Squinch	An arch spanning the corners of a square chamber and acting as support for a dome
Steatite	A greyish or greenish stone, which is generally soft and can easily be worked to make figurines, vessels, seals and other objects







Stellate	Arch nets arranged in a radiating pattern like that of a star
<i>Sthapati</i>	Architect
<i>Stupa</i>	A mound-like structure containing relics of Buddha or Buddhist monks worshipped by Buddhists
Stucco	A fine plaster used for coating wall surfaces
Suzerainty	A sovereign/state having some control over another ruler/state who/that is internally autonomous
Tablet	A regularly shaped, separate panel, or a representation thereof, often bearing an inscription or image
Terracotta	Literally, 'baked earth' mainly used to refer to fairly coarse, porous clay that, when fired, assumes a colour ranging from dull ochre to red
Tessellation	Decoration on walls and floors with mosaic
<i>Torans</i>	Carved, serpentine-shaped ceremonial gateways
Trefoil	Three curves in an arch
Turquoise	A semi-precious stone, sky blue to pale green in colour, highly prized for its use in jewellery by many ancient cultures
<i>Valabhi</i>	Sub-type of <i>nagara</i> temple
<i>Vanga</i>	Ancient name of the Bengal region
<i>Varna</i>	Four-fold division of the society based on profession i.e. <i>Brahmana</i> , <i>Kshatriya</i> , <i>Vaishya</i> , <i>Shudra</i> during ancient India
<i>Vesara</i>	Term used for the independent style of the temple during the time of the Chalukyas of Karnataka. It consists of a combination of the northern ( <i>nagara</i> ) and southern ( <i>dravida</i> ) styles
<i>Vihara</i>	Place of residence of Buddhist monk
<i>Vijanain</i>	Temples having a rectangular building with a roof that rises into a vaulted chamber
<i>Viman</i>	Superstructure over the <i>garbhagriha</i> of shrine in the south Indian temples
Volute	A scroll or spiral ornament on a pillar
Voussoir	A wedge-shaped or tapered stone used to construct an arch
<i>Vritta</i>	Circular
<i>Yakshas/Yakshanis</i>	Demi-gods and demi-goddesses — protectors of nature and resources



## NOTES

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