

The Mughal Empire

The weakness of the Delhi Sultanate and political disunity thereafter led to the establishment of Mughal rule in India. The Mughal Empire was founded by Babur after he defeated Ibrahim Lodi in the First Battle of Panipat in 1526.

Sources

The sources of the Mughal era include chronicles, accounts of foreigners, coins, monuments, royal orders, historical letters, religious literature and inscriptions.

Literary Sources

Many literary sources like **Tuzuk-i-Babri** written by Babur, **Ain-i-Akbari** and **Akbarnama** compiled by Abul Fazl, **Muntakhab-ul-Tawarikh** by Badauni, **Tarikh-i-Alfi** by Mulla Daud and **Shah Jahan Namah** by Inayat Khan give us important information about the political, social and economic conditions which existed in India during this time.

Ain-i-Akbari: It was written by Abul Fazl who was one of the nine gems in the court of Akbar. The Ain-i-Akbari is divided into five books. It provides information on the imperial household, administration and workings of several departments, servants and bureaucrats.

Monuments

The Mughal Emperors built several grand monuments and structures. Important monuments built during this period were the Buland Darwaza, Panch Mahal, Palace of Jodha Bai, Jami Masjid, Taj Mahal, Red Fort and Pearl Mosque.

Names of important architectural monuments:

Name of the Monuments	Builder	Location	Architectural Features
Humayun's Tomb	It was built under the supervision of Hamida Banu Begum (wife of Humayun)	Delhi	The main building stands on an 8.5 metre high platform and has archways on its sides. This structure is considered a precursor of the Taj Mahal.
Fatehpur Sikri	Akbar	40 km from Agra	It was a grand palace where Akbar's court functioned for a few years until the city was abandoned. Some monuments located in Fatehpur Sikri are the Panch Mahal, Buland Darwaza, Diwan-i-am, Diwan-i-khas, Jodha Bai's Palace and Raja Birbal's house.
Agra Fort	Akbar	Agra	It is made of red sandstone. Shahjahan later built monuments such as Diwan-i-Aam, Diwan-i-Khas and Moti Masjid. Many decorative living beings such as elephants, dragons and birds are engraved on the walls.
Taj Mahal	Shah Jahan	Agra	The monument was designed by Ustad Isa and is made of white marble. The Taj Mahal is constructed on a high platform with minarets on all four sides.
Jama Masjid	Shah Jahan	Delhi	It is the biggest mosque in India.
Red Fort	Shah Jahan	Delhi	It is made of red sandstone on the bank

of River Yamuna. Marble was also used in its construction. Diwan-i-Aam and Diwan-i-Khas were built in the fort. The Peacock Throne was placed in Diwan-i-Khas. Later, Aurangzeb built Moti Masjid (made of white marble) in the Red Fort.

The Mughal Dynasty

Babur

- Babur was a descendant of Timur from his father's side and Chengiz Khan from his mother's side.
- He was a ruler of Farghana who later captured Kabul. He was invited by Daulat Khan Lodi to oust Ibrahim Lodi from the throne of Delhi.
- The First Battle of Panipat was fought between Ibrahim Lodi and Babur in 1526. Babur defeated Lodi and occupied Delhi and Agra.
- Immediately after his victory, Babur had to fight a fierce battle with the Rajput ruler Rana Sanga of Mewar in 1527 at Khanwa. After defeating Rana Sanga, Babur secured and strengthened his position in Delhi and Agra.
- Babur also had to fight the Battle of Ghagra against the Afghan armies. He was however not able to register comprehensive victory against the Afghans.
- Babur died in 1530. Although he laid the foundation of the Mughal rule in India, he was not able to consolidate the empire and administration of the country.



Babur laid the foundation of the Mughal rule in India.

Humayun

- Humayun ascended the throne in 1530. He was defeated by Sher Shah Suri, an Afghan chief, at Kannauj in 1540. Humayun managed to escape and took shelter in Persia.
- Sher Shah Suri was an able administrator and built the Grand Trunk Road of India running from Peshawar to Bengal.
- Sher Shah Suri died while inspecting gunpowder in one of his forts. His successors were weak.
- Humayun conquered Kabul and Kandahar with the help of Shah of Persia and then again captured Delhi in 1555. However, he was able to rule only for one year and died in 1556 as a result of a fall from the stairs of his library at Purana Quila.

Akbar

- Akbar was one of the greatest of Mughal rulers in India. He ascended the throne at the age of thirteen years. He was guided by his tutor, Bairam Khan.
- Akbar conquered several Indian states. He captured Malwa, Gondwana, Gujarat, Kashmir and Kabul. He then annexed various states in the Deccan.
- At the time of Akbar's death, his empire extended from Kabul and Kandhar in the west to Assam in the east. His empire encompassed Ahmednagar, Khandesh and Berar in the Deccan. He also subdued many Rajput princes except Mewar. Battle of Haldighati was fought between Akbar and Maharana Pratap in 1576. The latter fled the battle field because he was inflicted with heavy wounds.



Akbar is regarded as the greatest Mughal ruler.

Rajput Policy of Akbar

- Akbar realised that the Rajputs were a powerful force in India, and that it was difficult to rule the empire without their help and cooperation. He thus valued their friendship. To further strengthen their friendship, he entered matrimonial alliances with the Rajputs.
- The Rajputs were given an important position in the imperial court, and many Rajput princes were made mansabdars.
- By taking these steps, he was able to reduce and end the centuries old animosities which existed between the Muslims and the Rajputs.
- Because the Rajputs were made equal partners in the Mughal government, it greatly helped in the growth of composite culture in India.

Jahangir

- Akbar was succeeded by Jahangir. Although he had inherited many qualities of Akbar, his military achievements were not as great as those of Akbar.
- Jahangir was married to Nur Jahan who became influential and powerful in the later years of his reign. Her relatives occupied dominant position in the court. She also struck coins in her name. All the royal farmans carried her name along with the imperial signature.
- Jahangir was famous for his 'Chain of Justice'. He had installed a long golden chain on the walls of his palace and declared that any person who had been unjustly treated could pull the chain and seek justice from the king.
- Jahangir was able to conquer Mewar.
- Two ambassadors of King James I of England—Captain Hawkins and Sir Thomas Roe—visited the Mughal court during the time of Jahangir. They wanted to obtain favourable trade concessions for the East India Company from Jahangir. The Portuguese had also become powerful at this time.

Shah Jahan

- Shah Jahan ascended the throne after a brief struggle of power. Nur Jahan wanted to place her son-in-law on the throne. However, Shah Jahan after killing his contender and some royal princes occupied the throne.
- During the reign of Shah Jahan, the Portuguese strengthened their position in India. The Dutch East India Company formed in 1602, established its trading units at Surat, Ahmedabad, Cochin, Patna, Agra and Negapatnam. Later, the English East India Company became the supreme power in the country.
- His period is known for the construction of various monuments and structures. However, this drained the royal treasury. Thus, taxes during his period were increased to one-half of the produce. His long reign provided peace and stability to the Empire.
- The Mughals lost control of Kandhar during this period which could never be regained by them.



Shah Jahan

Aurangzeb

- Shah Jahan was succeeded by Aurangzeb in 1659. Aurangzeb occupied the throne after a fierce struggle for power with his brothers and father.
- His long reign of fifty years was marked by various wars and annexations. He spent the last 25 years of his reign in fighting battles to annex the states of the Deccan.
- He reversed the policy of religious tolerance followed by Akbar and re-imposed jaziya, a religious tax on non-Muslims.
- After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the Mughal Empire began to disintegrate.

Later Mughals

- The successors of the Mughals are known as Later Mughals. Bahadur Shah succeeded Aurangzeb in 1707. The Later Mughals had to fight numerous battles against the Afghan rulers and the English East India Company.
- The Mughals under Shah Alam II were defeated by the English in the Battle of Buxar fought in 1764.
- Gradually, the East India Company became the strongest power in India, and the Mughal Empire declined in due course of time.
- Bahadur Shah Zafar was the last ruler of the Mughal Empire. After the revolt of 1857, his sons and grandsons were shot dead by the British and he was pensioned off to Rangoon (Yangon, Myanmar) by the British where he died in 1862. His death marked the end of the Mughal Empire.

Administration under the Mughals

- The Mughal Empire was highly centralised as all the powers were vested in the king. The Mughal kings were considered the vice regent of God on the Earth. The king was the head of the Executive, Legislature, Judiciary and Army. He was supposed to be benevolent towards his citizens.
- During the rule of Babur and Humayun, the *vakil* was Prime Minister who was entrusted with wide powers and took important civil and administrative decisions. The powers of the *vakil* declined during the reign of Akbar.
- *Diwan* was the head of the revenue department and kept records of all income and expenditures of the state. The *qazi* headed the judicial department.
- Under Akbar, the Empire was divided into twelve provinces or *subhas* which were further sub-divided into *sarkars*, and each *sarkar* was divided into *mahals*.
- A Governor or *subedar* was in charge of the province. He had to maintain law and order in the province and ensure smooth collection of revenues. Revenues of the provinces were looked after by the *diwan*.
- Other important officials of the provinces were *faujdar*, *kotwal*, *bakshi*, *sadrqazi* and *muhtasib*. All these officers were appointed by the centre.

Mansabdari System

The term *mansab* means an office or a rank and a person who occupied this office or held the rank came to be known as a *mansabdar*. A mansabdar maintained horsemen or soldiers depending on his rank in the court. Some important features of this system were

- An official in the royal service was given a rank or a mansab depending on the nature of his work. While a mansabdar of a lower level could maintain up to ten horsemen, the mansabdar of the highest level could keep seven thousand horsemen.
- The mansabdars were appointed by the king. The king had the power to promote or dismiss them.
- The king paid his mansabdars in the form of jagirs. The revenue collected from the jagir could be used by the mansabdars to pay his horsemen.
- The mansabdars had the right to collect only a fixed amount of revenues from their jagirs and had no power to administer them.

During the reign of Aurangzeb, the number of mansabdars increased substantially. This resulted in the shortage of jagirs.

Land Revenue System

Raja Todar Mal was the revenue minister of Akbar. He introduced some important reforms in the revenue system. The main features of the revenue system at this time were

- Land was surveyed and was measured with a bamboo string attached with iron rings.
- The cultivable land was categorised into four kinds—extremely fertile, fertile, middling and bad.
- To calculate the land revenue to be paid, the average produce of the last ten years was taken into account, and the revenue was fixed on the basis of this average.
- One-third of the produce was to be paid as the revenue which could be paid either in cash or in kind.
- In case of failure of crops because of droughts and floods, the state advanced loans to farmers.

Social Developments

- Society under the Mughals was a contrast of rich and poor. The king occupied the highest social rank in the country. The nobles and aristocrats enjoyed privileges and lived a luxurious life.
- Below the nobles were the people belonging to the middle class. It consisted of landlords, merchants, traders and rich peasants.
- Most of the people in society belonged to the lowest strata. Their life was hard and they had to toil throughout the day to earn their livelihood. They were suppressed by revenue collectors. Towards the end of Shah Jahan's rule, the lives of peasants had become miserable. They not only had to pay increased taxes but were also oppressed by provincial governors.
- Society was divided into two main religions—Hindus and Muslims. Under Akbar, the Hindus enjoyed greater degree of freedom. The Mughal society largely gives us a picture of society based on religious harmony and peaceful coexistence.

Mughals as an Integrating Force

Akbar is known for his policies of religious toleration. His policies created a spirit of religious tolerance as he took numerous steps to promote social and religious harmony among the people. Some of these measures were

- Akbar abolished the poll tax or jaziya which was levied on non-Muslims. He also abolished the practice of forcibly converting prisoners to Islam.
- Akbar included many Hindus into the nobility. Many Rajput princes and Hindus were given high mansabs.
- Akbar built a Hall of Prayer called Ibadat Khana at Fatehpur Sikri in 1575. Theologians belonging to various religions were invited to this Hall of Prayer, and Akbar discussed various religious and spiritual matters with them.
- A declaration or mazhar was issued by Akbar which declared him as the final arbitrator in religious matters.
- Akbar founded the religious order called Din-i-Ilahi. It was based on the principles of oneness of God. It stressed on courage, loyalty and justice. Akbar believed in the policy of sulh-i-kul or peaceful coexistence.
- Akbar set up a translation department for translating Sanskrit, Arabic and Greek works into Persian. Thus, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Gita and other texts were translated into Persian.

Social and Educational Reforms

- He prohibited the practice of sati and legalised the remarriages of widows.
- He did not encourage child marriages. The minimum age for the marriage of girls was raised to 14 years, while the age of marriage of boys was raised to 16 years. Consent of both bride and bridegroom was necessary before marriage.

- Two educational reforms of Akbar were
 - Akbar emphasised on the study of secular subjects such as mathematics, logic, history and astronomy apart from the study of religious scriptures.
 - Akbar set up a translation department to translate Sanskrit, Arabic and Greek works into Persian.
 - Female education existed during the Mughal period. While girls from rich families generally received education through private tuitions, girls belonging to the middle class were able to attend the same schools as boys.