

Architectural Legacy of the Mughal Empire: Akbar to Shah Jahan (1556–1658)

Ankita Yadav

Department History, Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, U.P.

ABSTRACT

The Mughal Empire, which ruled India from the 1526 to 1857, was a period of unparalleled cultural, artistic and architectural achievement. Between 1556 and 1658, the three Mughal emperors- Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, left an indelible mark on India's architectural landscape. Their reigns witnessed the construction of some of the most magnificent monuments in Indian history. This period saw the evolution of a distinct Mughal architectural style, characterized by the blending of Indian, Persian, and Islamic influences.

Akbar, the third Mughal emperor, laid the foundation for this architectural legacy. His reign saw the construction of several notable monuments, including the Red Fort in Agra, the Buland Darwaza at Fatehpur Sikri, and the Jama Masjid in Fatehpur Sikri. These structures showcased Akbar's innovative use of red sandstone and his emphasis on grandeur and symmetry. Jahangir, Akbar's son and successor, continued this architectural tradition. His reign saw the construction of the Shalimar Gardens in Kashmir, the Mausoleum of Itimad-ud-Daulah in Agra, and the Moti Masjid in Lahore. Jahangir's monuments were marked by their intricate ornamentation and use of white marble.

However, it was Shah Jahan, Jahangir's son and successor, who reached the pinnacle of Mughal architectural achievement. His reign saw the construction of the Taj Mahal, widely considered one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. Other notable monuments from Shah Jahan's reign include the Red Fort in Delhi, the Jama Masjid in Delhi, and the Shalimar Gardens in Delhi. Shah Jahan's monuments were characterized by their perfect proportions, intricate inlays, and innovative use of materials.

These monuments, spread across Agra, Delhi, and Kashmir, represent the pinnacle of Mughal architectural achievement. Characterized by flawless proportions, intricate ornamentation, and a harmonious blend of red sandstone and white marble, they reflect the emperors' patronage, vision, and passion for beauty.

This paper will explore the major monuments constructed during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, examining their architectural styles, historical significance, and cultural impact. By analyzing these monuments, we can gain a deeper understanding of the Mughal Empire's cultural and artistic achievements and their enduring legacy in Indian history.

Keywords:

Mughal Architecture, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri, Red Fort, Jama masjid, Indo-Islamic Architecture, Mughal Monuments, Agra, Kahmir, Cultural Heritage.

I. ARCHITECTURE DURING MUGHAL PERIOD

Five rulers of the Mughal dynasty were associated with the development of the architecture of this period the emperor Babar Humayun Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan (Chandra 146). Mughal architecture impresses with grandeur, elegance and cultural fusion, blending Persian, Indian and Central Asian styles. Iconic structures include majestic forts, palaces, mosques and tombs featuring distinctive bulbous domes, intricate carvings and expansive gardens. Mughal fortresses and palaces showcased military strength, imperial splendor and strategic brilliance. Examples like Agra Fort and Delhi's Red Fort served as royal residences and administrative hubs. Constructed from red sandstone and marble, these forts boasted: Massive walls and towering gateways Intricately decorated pavilions. Mughal emperors left a lasting legacy through magnificent mosques and tombs, testifying to their devotion and architectural prowess.

Mosques like Delhi's Jama Masjid and Lahore's Badshahi Mosque showcased grandeur, with expansive courtyards, soaring minarets and intricately adorned domes. Mughal tombs, exemplified by the Taj Mahal and Humayun's Tomb, epitomized architectural excellence and emotional depth. Mughal gardens, or "charbagh," were vibrant expressions of paradise on earth and imperial prestige. Babur constructed many gardens like Garden of Victory etc. Only two of his Indian gardens can be identified with any certainty. One is in Agra today called the Rambagh . Second one can be identified at Dholpur today is Bharatpur district Rajasthan. It is his Bagh-i-Nilufar, or Lotus garden, described in his memoirs (Asher 22). Water features fountains, cascades and serene channels symbolized abundance and prosperity. Softly flowing water and shimmering pools created sensory bliss. Amidst bustling cities and arid landscapes, Mughal gardens offered refuge, rejuvenation and spiritual connection.

Inspired by Persian and Islamic traditions, charbagh gardens reflected Mughal emperors' passion for elegance, symmetry and nature. These havens celebrated life, beauty and eternal serenity, leaving enduring architectural and cultural legacies.

The Mughals introduced new techniques and styles that influenced subsequent generations of builders and designers. Their use of symmetry, proportion, and ornamentation set new standards for architectural excellence and laid the groundwork for future developments in Indo-Islamic architecture.

MONUMENTS DURING AKBAR

Mughal architecture flourished under Emperor Akbar's visionary rule, introducing breathtaking innovations. The first major building to be erected during Mughal rule is Humayun's mausoleum, not begun until 976/1568–9 in the early years of Akbar's reign, and erected, not in his lifetime after the usual practice, but by his widow (Page 28). Initially, structures were built using red sandstone, exemplified by Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's magnificent architectural legacy. This fortified city, capital of the Mughal Empire from 1571 to 1585, showcased stunning red sandstone constructions. Abu Fazl justly observes that his sovereign "planned splendid efficiency and trust the work of his mind and heart in the garment of Stone and clay." Fergusson, aptly remarked that Fatehpur Sikri, "was a reflex of the mind of a great man" (Datta 156).

Fatehpur Sikri's crown jewel is the Jama Masjid, India's grandest mosque. Its majestic architecture, blending Islamic, Persian and Indian styles, reflects Akbar's eclectic taste. Elegant domes, towering minarets and intricate carvings adorn this sacred masterpiece. Other notable structures within Fatehpur Sikri include the Buland Darwaza, Diwan-i-Khas and Salim Chishti's Tomb.

Akbar's architectural advancements revolutionized Mughal building design, emphasizing grandeur, symmetry and cultural fusion. His legacy continues to inspire awe and admiration. The Delhi Gate of Agra Fort also represents the architectural style of Akbar. During his type different palaces were also built like Jahangir Mahal, Jodha Bai Mahal, and Birbal Mahal etc.

HUMAYUN TOMB

Humayun's Tomb, initiated during Akbar's reign, pioneered the distinctive Mughal architectural style, blending Persian expertise with Indian flair. Constructed between 1564 and 1572 under Humayun's widow Hamida Bano Begum's patronage, this landmark project showcased sophisticated Persian techniques. Designed by Persian architect Mirak Mirza Ghiyas, the tomb features an octagonal base, elevated arcaded sandstone platform and garden enclosure, precursor to charbagh layouts. The central grand chamber houses Humayun's grave, surrounded by smaller interconnected octagonal rooms for family members, linked by diagonal passages and pointed arches.

Persian craftsmen contributed intricate inlays, marble and sandstone work, merging cultural aesthetics. The building is in red sandstone with white and grey marble inlay (sparing use of other colours as well), executed in star-shaped designs at the drum below the dome (Hussain 04). This iconic structure exemplifies India's adaptation of Persian architectural concepts, epitomizing Mughal architectural excellence under Akbar's visionary patronage. Humayun's Tomb stands as a testament to this enduring cultural fusion, serene amidst lush gardens, reflecting the symphony of Indian, Persian and Islamic influences.

AGRA FORT

Agra Fort, also known as the Red Fort, is a historic fortress in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India. Built by Emperor Akbar in 1573, this majestic structure spans 96 acres. Initially constructed from red sandstone, its foundation was reinforced with bricks and marble. Serving as the primary Mughal Dynasty residence until 1638, Agra Fort showcases stunning Mughal and Indo-Islamic architectural styles. Surrounded by walls on three sides and the serene Yamuna River on the fourth, the fort encompasses various complexes and monuments. Its impressive design reflects Akbar's vision, blending elegance, strength and strategic location. Encircled by a sturdy double battlement wall of red sandstone, this 2.5-kilometer-long fortress boasts a 2-kilometer perimeter wall towering 70 feet high. Its massive walls and battlements convey an effect of great power. Inside the fort, Akbar had built many structures in the styles of the region of Bengal and Gujarat. There are four gates to enter the fort which are located on the four sides. These are Jal Darwaza, Amar Singh gate, Delhi Gate, and the north gate but now there are only two gates open which are Amar Singh gate (as you can see in pic.2) and Delhi gate (in pic 3). The Fort is surrounded by a double wall, loop-holed for musketry and crowned by rampart-ways behind embattled parapets, but a part of the inner wall on the east is occupied by palaces and other edifices with the SHAH BURJ and BENGALI BURJ at the northern and southern extremities respectively (Page 28-29)

Within the fort's majestic confines lie breathtaking palaces: Jahangir Palace, Khas Mahal, Sheesh Mahal, Diwan-i-Khas (Private Audience Hall) and Diwan-i-Aam (Public Audience Hall). Two elegant mosques complement these architectural marvels, showcasing the blend of Mughal and Indo-Islamic styles. Agra Fort's intricate design, imposing walls and stunning internal structures exemplify Emperor Akbar's architectural genius, reflecting the Mughal Empire's grandeur and elegance.

FATEHPUR SIKRI [1571 – 1585]

Fatehpur Sikri is located at 27 degree latitude and 77 degree longitude to the south west of Agra at a distance of 40 kms (Singh 21). And designated it as his capital from 1571 to 1585. The city's construction spanned 15 years, featuring elaborate buildings such as royal courts, palaces, mosques and various other structures. Initially named Fatehabad, meaning "City of Victory," it was later renamed Fatehpur Sikri. Its earlier name was only Sikri which existed during the Sultanate period (Rizvi 01). This historic city was also notable for housing nine esteemed courtiers, known as the "Nine Gems," who were handpicked by Akbar himself. The city's name comes from the ancient village of Sikri. Archaeological excavations by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) from 1999 to 2009 revealed that Sikri was already a thriving settlement with temples, markets and residential areas before Emperor Akbar built his capital city upon the site.

Akbar meticulously oversaw the construction of Fatehpur Sikri, blending Persian and Indian architectural styles. The city's buildings, crafted from vibrant red sandstone, showcased a harmonious fusion of cultures. The pillars, lintels, brackets, tiles and posts were cut from local rocks and assembled without the use of mortar. Notably, the imperial palace's pavilions were arranged geometrically, inspired by Arabian design principles, reflecting Akbar's eclectic taste and architectural innovation. The historic city of Fatehpur Sikri boasts impressive architecture, merging Mughal and Indian elements. Surrounded by walls on three sides and water on the fourth, its buildings showcase a fusion of Hindu, Jain and Mughal design influences.

The buildings in Fatehpur Sikri can be divided into two main categories: religious and secular. Religious buildings, like Jama Masjid and Shaikh Salim Chisti's tomb, feature arcade styles. Secular structures, including palaces and administrative buildings, showcase trabeated designs.

The city's architecture was conceived by esteemed architects Tuhir Das [a hindu architect credited the central pavilion of the Diwan-i-Khas], Chiragh Dehlvi [a persioan architect who worked on the Jama Masjid Mosque] and Dhruv Chawla. Following Akbar's conquests of Chittor and Ranthambore in 1569, he commissioned the city's construction.

BULAND DARWAZA

When Akbar returned back from his victorious campaign in Deccan, he erected Buland Darwaza at the entrance of Jama Masjid at Fatehpur Sikri. This gateway is the most imposing structure as its height is 134 feet. This is approached by a steep flight of steps 42 feet high, so that the entire composition rises to a total height of 176 feet above the roadway. Across its front, its measure 130 feet, while from front to the back it is 123 feet (Chandra 151). Its design transitions from grandiose outside to human-scale inside. The gate has two inscriptions; one advises detachment, urging prayer and recognizing life's fleeting nature.

This colossal gateway, made from stunning red sandstone, white marble and black marble. Adorned with small domed pavilions (chhatris) and towering spires (minars), this 15-story masterpiece serves as the southern entrance to the city. As we can see in pic 2, it has the deep architecture of Islamic inscriptions and below this there is a geometrical patterns designs is also added in the front to make it more religious and beautiful. The Buland Darwaza, a magnificent gateway, boasts impressive architecture. The central portico comprises three arched entrances, with the largest one, in the centre, is known locally as the Horseshoe Gate, after the custom of nailing horseshoes to its large wooden doors for luck. Outside the giant steps of the Buland Darwaza to the left is a deep well. An inscription on the gateway's facade highlights Akbar's progressive and accepting approach to faith. Beautiful floral patterns crafted from white marble adorn the arch's peak, adding elegance.

JAMA MASJID

The Jama Masjid of Fatehpur Sikri, is situated on the western side of the royal complex of fort palaces and in between an entrance gate is provided in the eastern side (Singh 20). constructed between 1568 and 1574 under Akbar's reign, its design reflects the fusion of Indian, Islamic and Persian styles. Iranian and Mughal architecture was used to build the mosque. It was the largest Mosque in the empire at the time.

The mosque's entrance, the Buland Darwaza, boasts imposing dimensions, standing 176 feet tall. Upon entering, visitors find themselves in a large courtyard. The mosque's main prayer hall, featuring seven mihrabs, stretches 350 feet long. Its facade is adorned with intricate carvings, marble inlays and ornate calligraphy. The central mihrab, adorned with precious stones and intricate marble work, signifies the royal prayer area.

It is constructed with the use of red sandstone and white marble. It follows the traditional architectural layout of a mosque, featuring a central courtyard surrounded by arcades on three sides and a domed skyline. The western side houses the prayer hall, comprising three separate enclosed sanctuaries, each topped with a dome and interconnected by arcades. Typically, entry into the mosque is through the eastern side, marked by an impressive gateway structure fashioned as a half-hexagonal porch. The Chajja's is significantly titled and features square-shaped Chatri that surround the supports of the chajja.

The mosque boasts a spacious courtyard where thousands gather for congregational worship, accommodating approximately 25,000 devotees at once. The mosque's design allows entry through multiple points – northern,

southern and eastern sides – via staircases, ensuring easy access. Its striking tower stands five stories tall, blending materials: red sandstone constructs the first three and fifth levels, while marble elegantly covers the fourth. The Jama Masjid's architectural grandeur symbolizes Mughal power and Akbar's devotion. This masterpiece continues to inspire awe and reverence, reflecting the rich cultural heritage of India's Mughal era.

TOMB OF SHAIKH SALIM CHISHTI

The majestic Fatehpur Sikri mosque complex is home to the exquisite tomb of Sufi saint Shaikh Salim Chishti. One of the interest and archaeological significance is the tomb of Salim Chishti, after 1571, a square chamber with an outer verandah which is screened with marble lattices on the outside: a feature characteristic not of North India, but familiar in the tombs of Gujarat (Page 29). Constructed from 1571 to 1580 using red stone but later changed in white marble, this elegant tomb honors the saint's spiritual significance. This tomb is built within the quadrangle of jama masjid, fatehpur sikri, Agra. Emperor Akbar commissioned its construction to express gratitude for the saint's blessings, this majestic mausoleum honors Salim Chisti (1478-1572), a revered Sufi saint and descendant of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer. The tomb of Shaikh Salim Chishti in the Fatehpur Sikri complex – the one Shaikh who was a sort of patron saint of the Mughal family and to whose intercession with God Jahangir owed his birth and his personal name, Salim, was evaluated in terms of the money Akbar had spent upon it and the adjoining mosque (Mukhia 101). Shaikh Salim Chishti was a disciple of renowned Ajmer Sharif saint Khwajah Moin-ud-din Chishti.

It is an architectural masterpiece as it exhibits one of the finest specimens of marble work in India. The tomb, accessible via steps, showcases Mughal craftsmanship. The platform which is built by black and yellow marble, on which the tomb is constructed has the height of 1m. Tourists can enter the tomb through five steps. The tomb is surrounded by marble screens. The location of the tomb is in the center of the hall having semi-circular dome. It consists of a square exterior of 24ft side which contains a mortuary chamber of 16ft side, whole covered by a low dome. It is surrounded by a raised platform with four minarets (chhaparkhat). The platform is mostly draped in a green cloth. The entrance to the main chamber has verses from the Holy Quran inscribed on it. People visit this place to seek blessings and fulfillment of their wishes.

Adjacent to Salim Chishti's tomb stands the red sandstone tomb of Islam Khan I, his grandson and a renowned Mughal general. This tomb boasts a dome, 36 smaller domed pavilions and multiple male descendants' graves, including unnamed ones, all linked to Salim Chishti.

Jodha Bai Mahal

Jodha Bai Mahal, commissioned by Emperor Akbar in 1569 for his beloved queen Mariam-uz-Zamani, is Fatehpur Sikri's largest palace. This majestic zenana (royal women's quarters) exemplifies the harmonious blend of Hindu and Persian architecture, crafted from red sandstone. This Palace is also known as Raniwas and Zenani Dyodhi, the palace showcases Rajput influence, built around a secluded courtyard. Its rectangular design features a grand eastern gateway measuring 231.8 by 215 feet, guarded by sentry rooms and adorned with triangular ceilings. The magnificent gateway embodies Rajasthani architecture. The structure in this palace was so designed that each group of her apartment could be readily divided off from others if needed. It was also arranged that the chambers below could be heated in cold weather whereas the chambers above always remain airy and cool (Chandra 2003 150).

The palace's double-story Khawabgah (dream palace) is breathtaking. Its magnificent gateway embodies Rajasthani architecture, while intricate Hindu motifs adorn the interior, featuring swans, elephants, parrots and Srivastava marks. These motifs confirm the palace's occupancy by a Hindu lady, Mariam-uz-Zamani, Akbar's favorite queen consort and the mother of Prince Salim. It encompasses a Hindu temple and Tulsi math for Jodha Bai to worship peacefully. Intricate connections link this palace to Akbar's residence. Ornate curvilinear pillars, vedikas and Hindu symbols adorn the western temple suite. The red sandstone structure boasts captivating chhatris, pillars, semicircular domes and niches.

BIRBAL MAHAL

Mahesh Das, popularly known as Raja Birbal was an Indian minister during Akbar's reign. Birbal's House, built in 1571, is a stunning Mughal monument within Fatehpur Sikri's imperial harem. The largest and the finest of the domestic buildings in Fatehpur Sikri settings aside the palatial residents known as Jodha Bai, is Birbal's house (**Smith 01**). This double-dome residential marvel features exquisite carvings adorning walls and pillars, creating breathtaking backdrops. There are cupolas over the upper rooms and pyramidal roofs over the porches. All of this is constructed on a modified principle of the double dome as they have an inner and outer shell with an appreciable empty space between, so the interior was kept cool (Chandra 2003 150).

The structure comprises four interconnected square rooms, each measuring 16.10 feet, and two oblong entrance porches. Rooms feature flat ceilings, while porches boast triangular chhappar ceilings with pyramidal roofs. Richly carved pilasters divide the interior into three bays, displaying single border, arabesque and floral designs. The ground floor comprises four spacious rooms and two expansive porches, ideal for relaxation and

socializing. The first floor is adorned with ornate jharokhas overlooking the courtyard and simple chajjas. Upper rooms have octagonal drum-supported domes with raised trefoil patterns, inverted lotus and kalash finials and remnants of tile work. The innovative lintel and beam composition, beautifully carved brackets uniting pillars and arches and intricate lotus and arabesque designs exemplify exceptional craftsmanship.

MONUMENTS DURING JAHANGIR

Despite Jahangir's relatively uneventful reign in terms of large-scale architectural projects, his refined artistic sensibilities shone through in his patronage of miniature painting, a hallmark of Mughal artistry. Architectural decoration is characterized by a plethora of materials: the familiar sandstone carving (which attains a new refinement), white marble, stone inlaid, painted stucco, and tile-work (Koch 70). Although his focus lay with minor arts, two significant buildings were constructed during his rule.

The two most important buildings of Jahangir's reign are the tomb at Agra, begun 1031/1622, of his father-in-law Mirza Ghiyath Beg entitled Itimad ad-Daula, in marble inlaid in Persian motifs (cypresses, vines, ovals, vases, wine-cups) in true pietra dura, with four short corner towers, and no marble tracery screens; and the tomb of Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan, similar to that of Humayun's tomb but without the corner chambers (Page 30). This innovative method, pioneered by Italian craftsmen, added a new dimension to Mughal architecture, allowing for intricate, jewel-toned designs to adorn the structures.

AKBAR'S TOMB

The majestic Tomb of Akbar at Sikandra, Agra, marks the beginning of this architectural era. Conceived by Akbar himself, its construction began during his lifetime but remained unfinished at his death. His son Jahangir completed the project eight years after Akbar's death in 1613, incorporating his own design modifications. This grand monument, known as "The Tomb of Akbar the Great," showcases a perfect fusion of Hindu, Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, and Jain themes.

Today, this monumental complex seamlessly blends the artistic visions of both emperors, presenting a unique fusion of their architectural styles. Akbar's tomb has a unique design. It is composed of tiers one over the other, to a total of five storeys, like the Assyrian ziggurat or the earliest stepped pyramids (Nath 360). Akbar's original design merged with Jahangir's alterations, resulting in a captivating testament to the evolutionary spirit of Mughal architecture. This iconic structure stands as a poignant reflection of the contrasting tastes and creative legacies of two remarkable rulers. The complex's perimeter walls enclose a sprawling square garden, with the tomb structure at its center. Measuring 320 feet on each side and over 100 feet high, the square plan is symmetrically designed.

Akbar's majestic tomb complex in Sikandra is a masterful blend of architecture and beauty. Sikandra, named after Delhi ruler Sikandar Lodi, lies just 13 kilometers from Agra Fort. Akbar himself selected this site and planned his mausoleum, breaking away from conventional domed structures prevalent during his reign. This innovative design sets Akbar's mausoleum apart as a remarkable architectural achievement. He ordered the larger piece of an iron pillar to be dispatched from Dhar to Agra and put in the Courtyard of Akbar's tomb and to burn a lamb on its top in night (Nath 87).

The complex features a stunning tomb at its center, surrounded by an enclosed garden with gateways on each side. The tomb's three-story design includes: A basement with arcaded platforms and vaulted cells, a middle section with three tiers of red sandstone pavilions, and a white marble top story with an open court and colonnades. Only the southern gateway is functional, while the others are ornamental. This gateway is adorned with white marble minarets, painted stucco, and marble inlay, showcasing unique motifs like elephants, swans, lotus flowers, and more.

Akbar's tomb has had a lasting impact on Indian architecture, inspiring subsequent mausoleums like Jahangir's in Lahore and Nur Jahan's father's in Agra. Its innovative design and beautiful ornamentation make it a true marvel of Mughal architecture.

ITMAD UD DAULA

The tomb of Itmad-ud-daulah, "the Lord High Treasurer," is on the east or left bank of the river, and is reached by crossing the pontoon bridge (Havell 87). It was built by Nur Jahan, the favourite wife of Jahangir in memory of her father Mirza Ghiyas Beg, signifies a remarkable architectural shift from Akbar's robust style to the elegant and refined aesthetic of Jahangir and Shah Jahan's era. This monument is considered to be the inspiration behind the Taj Mahal. For this fact it is known as the "**Baby Taj Mahal**". This tomb is considered a more delicate artwork than Taj Mahal, with marble lattice screens and fine carvings. This was the first of many tombs to be erected on the banks of River Yamuna.

This magnificent monument showcases a seamless blend of elegance and sophistication, marking a transition from robustness to sensuous architecture. The Tomb is situated within a charming square enclosure, marked by red sandstone gateways. Built entirely of pure white marble, with profuse ornamentation of mosaic and inlay in choicest tints and tones, it marks the phase of transition from the grand and

massive red-sandstone structures of Akbar to the graceful and exquisite white marble mansions of Shah Jehan (Nath 1976 102).

The central white marble structure stands proudly amidst a meticulously designed garden, featuring manicured lawns, strategically placed trees, winding pathways, serene water tanks, and sparkling fountains in a garden. Built on a low platform, the square structure features four octagonal minarets with domed roofs at each corner, adding a touch of grandeur. The central chamber is surrounded by a verandah adorned with intricate marble tracery, while the main tomb is crafted from white marble and embellished with vibrant mosaics and *pietra dura*.

At the four corners of the low platform are four squat attached minarets. Open-pillared domed pavilions known as *chhatris* top the minarets. The dome, with its canopy-like shape, is different from the conventional domes of this period. Panels of geometric designs, created by inlaid coloured stones, decorate the dado level of the tomb.

The central chamber houses the yellow marble tombs of Itimad ud Daula and his wife, surrounded by side rooms decorated with delicate painted floral motifs. The complex is enclosed by four red sandstone gateways, forming a picturesque square garden that provides a stunning backdrop for the radiant white marble tomb at its center.

SHALIMAR BAGH

Jahangir's iconic Shalimar Bagh was a labor of love, built to captivate the heart of his cherished wife, Nur Jahan. Transforming an ancient garden in 1619, he created a majestic royal sanctuary, dubbed 'Farah Baksh'. The Shalimar Garden is one of the Largest Mughal Garden in Kashmir, which is spread in about 1768 feet by 588 feet. The garden's three-tiered layout showcased exquisite fountains, chinar-lined vistas, and tranquil water features. Jahangir's thoughtful design ensured picturesque pathways, bordered by lush greenery and majestic chinar trees, framed the serene lake. Shalimar Bagh stands as a poignant testament to the enduring love of Jahangir and Nur Jahan.

At Shalimar Bagh's garden terrace, two charming pavilions, built in Kashmiri style, occupy a secluded stone plinth, once reserved for the royal harem. The central feature of the Mughal garden at Kashmir is a spring, whose waters are collected in a canal (*nahr*) that forms the main axis of the garden (Koch 86). The wall is about six feet in height. Beneath the platform is canal which is about 15 -20 feet in width. The combination of 3 high buildings, waterfalls and pleasant trees presents a 4 beautiful view of Garden. The bagh is famous for its picturesque *chini khanas* – arched niches positioned behind waterfalls. A fountain pool, fed from higher terraces, surrounds these niches. Shalimar Bagh's waterfalls are a unique attraction, especially at night, when oil lamps illuminate the niches, casting a magical glow on the water, evoking a sense of enchantment. The water was carried to garden by a canal, which flows through the rice- fields and finally fell-into the Dal-lake. A Canal called as *Shah-nahr* is the main supplier of water to the Shalimar Garden, it flows from higher part of the Garden to the lower part. In Shalimar Garden all paths are beautified with chinar and aspen trees. It is a three terraced Garden representing the islamic paradise garden.

MONUMENTS DURING SHAH JAHAN

Shahjahan's reign marked a golden era in architecture, characterized by an unprecedented use of marble. Red sandstone, once the preferred building material, gave way to marble's refined elegance. This shift sparked significant stylistic innovations. Buildings began to feature marble arcades with intricately curved arches, while domes took on a bulbous shape with a constricted neck, often doubling up for added grandeur. The introduction of marble structures into the sandstone fortresses originally devised by Akbar was, however, mainly a preliminary procedure, a preparation for the magnificent architectural schemes undertaken by Shah Jahan which have given such distinction to the Mughal reign (Brown 102-103). The replacements by the emperor Shah Jahan of the stone buildings in the palace, forts of Agra and Lahore by marble pavilion appears to have been carried out intermittently. For instance at Agra, the first of these marble halls to be built was *Diwcm-i-Am* dated 1627 (Figure 6.7). This was followed some ten years later by *Diwan-i-Khas* (Chandra 154).

During his period, some of the most magnificent monuments in Indian history were constructed. The majestic Lal Qila, also known as the Red Fort, was built in Delhi, serving as a symbol of imperial power and grandeur. The emperor's passion for beauty and spirituality led to the construction of exquisite mosques, including the *Moti Masjid* within the Agra Fort and the *Jami Masjid* in Delhi. However, the crowning jewel of Shah Jahan's architectural legacy is the breathtaking Taj Mahal, a stunning garden-tomb built in memory of his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal. This iconic monument, with its perfect proportions, intricate marble inlays, and serene gardens, has become an enduring symbol of love and beauty. Delhi has regained its lost status when Shah Jahan shifted the seat of the empire from Agra to Delhi in 1638. He began to lay out the city of Shahjahanbad on the right bank of the river Jamitna. Fourteen gates led into the city (Chandra 156).

Other notable monuments built during Shah Jahan's reign include the Shalimar Gardens and the Jama Masjid in Delhi, as well as various other palaces, forts, and mausoleums throughout the Mughal Empire. Many buildings, palaces, forts, gardens and mosques due to him are to be found at places like Agra, Delhi, Lahore,

Kābul, Kashmir, Qandahar, Ajmer, Ahmadābād, Mukhlispur, and elsewhere (Kalikinkar 592). These structures showcase Shah Jahan's exquisite taste, architectural innovation, and unwavering commitment to creating timeless masterpieces.

TAJ MAHAL

The Taj Mahal is located on the banks of the River Yamuna. Over 22,000 workers built this amazing monument using materials and skills from all over India in 1632, under the visionary guidance of Emperor Shah Jahan and renowned architect Ustad Ahmad Lahori. The Taj is a perfect blend combining elements from Islamic, ottoman, Turkish, Persian, and Indian. Inside the complex, a peaceful garden provides a serene atmosphere, accompanied by a beautiful mosque and a grand entrance gate. At its heart lies the main tomb, built by Shah Jahan as a loving tribute to his wife Mumtaz Mahal. This stunning monument showcases the perfect blend of love, beauty, and architectural excellence. It is planned on the pattern of Humayun's Tomb and Timurid in style. It is impossible to convey an idea of its extreme delicacy, its architectural grandeur, and of the perfect taste and skill of the men who built it (Sakena, 264). The exterior is white marble with a sparing use of inlay work in coloured stones. Quranic verses in black calligraphy are inlaid on the marble surface.

The master-builders came from many different parts; the chief masons from Baghdad, Delhi, and Multan; the dome builders from Asiatic Turkey and from Samarkand; the mosaic workers from Kanauj and from Baghdad; the principal calligraphist for the inscriptions from Shiraz. Every part of India and Central Asia contributed the materials; Jaipur, the marble; Fatehpur Sikri, the red sandstone; the Panjab, jasper; China, the jade and crystal; Tibet, turquoises; Ceylon, lapis lazuli and sapphires; Arabia, coral and cornelian; Panna in Bundelkhand, diamonds; Persia, onyx and amethyst (Havell 74).

The Taj Mahal covers an area of 42 acres and stands on a 50-meter-high platform. It has four 137-foot-tall minarets and a 58-meter-high tomb. The dome has the circumference of 110 yards and height is 107 yards. The tomb is based on Islamic structure which symbolizes the unification of heaven and earth. The square on which the tomb stands symbolizes the universe. The complex includes a mosque and a guest house, both made of red sandstone. Its central chamber boasts exquisite decorations that surpass traditional methods. Instead of marble or jade, precious and semi-precious gems adorn the space. The octagonal room's design allows entry from any side, but only the southern gate, facing the garden, is regularly used. The 25-meter-high interior walls feature motifs on a false dome. Eight-pointed arches define the ground level, with intricate marble screens (Jali) filtering light through window balconies. Additional light enters through chattris (small domes) at each corner of the outer dome. For every hour of the day and for every atmospheric condition the Taj Mahal has its own color values. It ranges from the soft dreaminess at dawn to its cold splendour in the moonlight, when the dome thin of substance as the air, hangs, among the stars like a great pearl (Chandra 160).

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. The calligrapher was Amanat Khan but this was his title. His name was Abdal Haqq and he was a native of Shiran. The carvings and inlaid patterns have been designed in such manner as to give prominence to the white marble surface, rather than overshadowing it.

The main gateway, built in 1648, is 30 meters high and decorated with Quranic verses. Its silver door has engraved letters. After passing through the gateway, visitors enter a peaceful courtyard. The Taj Mahal's stunning architecture, lovely gardens, and spiritual significance make it a breathtaking monument to love and beauty.

It also has a beautiful mosque on its west side, facing the holy city of Mecca. The mosque was built by Isa Muhammad and features a stunning design. Inside, the floor has 569 prayer mats and the walls have verses from the Quran. A special stone indicates the direction of Mecca. The mosque also has a special platform where the leader delivers sermons. Interestingly, the mosque holds a temporary grave of Mumtaz Mahal, marked by a large stone.

Its garden is a spiritual haven, representing paradise as described in the Holy Quran. The lush greenery symbolizes tranquility and beauty. After passing through the main entrance, visitors enter this serene garden, spanning 580 meters by 300 meters. The garden is thoughtfully designed, divided into sixteen flower beds, with water courses weaving through them. This elegant layout creates a sense of harmony and peace, perfect for reflection and contemplation. According to the old Tartar custom, a garden was chosen as a site for the tomb—a garden planted with flowers and flowering shrubs, the emblems of life, and solemn cypress, the emblem of death and eternity. Such a garden, in the Mogul days, was kept up as a pleasure-ground during the owner's lifetime, and used as his last resting-place after his death (Havell 73).

Beyond the serene garden, lies the majestic mausoleum, spanning 95 square meters. A double staircase leads to the tomb, flanked by four 137-foot-tall minarets strategically designed to prevent collapse onto the main structure in case of disaster. Each minaret bears a single letter, collectively forming "Ar-Rahman," one of Allah's revered names. The mausoleum's central chamber overlooks four smaller rooms below, housing the graves of other family members.

RED FORT

The Red Fort, also known as Lal Qila, is a 17th-century fortress in Old Delhi, India, built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. It served as the imperial palace for over 200 years, from 1648 to 1857, and was the capital of the Mughal Empire. Shah Jahan built the fort as part of his new capital, Shahjahanabad, moving from Agra to bring prestige to his reign and showcase his architectural ambitions. It is located along the Yamuna River, the fort's walls were surrounded by moats, with the Salimgarh Fort, built in 1546, adjacent to its northeast corner. Construction began in 1638 and took 10 years to complete. Later rulers, including Aurangzeb, added significant developments to the fort.

The Red Fort, a historic monument in India, spans 254.67 acres within 2.4 kilometers of defensive walls. The fort's walls, 18-33 meters high, form an octagon with a longer north-south axis. This inner area, measuring 1600 feet by 1150 feet, its further side aligned along the eastern rampart thus overlooking the wide expanse of the river bed, accommodates the whole of the private and royal apartments ; outside this, and within the rectangular space remaining are the service quarters, such as barracks, servants' houses and other edifices of a miscellaneous order (Brown 103). Marble, floral decorations, and double domes showcase the later Mughal architecture style. The fort blends Persian, European, and Indian art, creating the unique Shahjahani style, rich in form, expression, and color. Notably, the Kohinoor diamond was once part of the fort's furnishings. Its chambers, corridors and pavilions) are of pure white marble, most elaborately carved, and exquisitely ornamented with flowers (Sakena 263). The Fort has three gates: Lahore Gate (main entrance), Delhi Gate (southern end), and Khizrabad Gate (emperor's private entrance). Lahore Gate leads to Chhatta Chowk, a covered bazaar selling silk, jewelry, and royal household items during the Mughal era. The Indian Flag flies proudly above the Lahore Gate.

Some of the important structures of Red Fort:

Diwan-i-Aam

The Diwan-i-Aam, or Hall of Public Audience, within the Red Fort, was a majestic architectural wonder that served as the public forum where the Mughal emperor addressed his subjects and heard their grievances. A large central quadrangle containing Diwan-i-Am (hall of public audience), on each side of this are two square open spaces designed, in the form of ornamental gardens and courtyards (Chandra 156). This grand hall, blending Mughal, Persian, and Indian styles, boasted 27 pillared arches, intricate marble and sandstone decorations, and ornate carvings. The central throne area was reserved for the emperor, with separate sections for nobles and commoners.

Diwan-i-Khas

The Diwan-i-Khas, or Hall of Private Audience, within the Red Fort, epitomizes the pinnacle of Mughal architectural excellence. This opulent chamber, built using luxurious materials like white marble and precious stones, served as the exclusive meeting place for the emperor and his closest advisors. Designed by architect Ustad Ahmad Lahori, the Diwan-i-Khas boasts, a rectangular shape with a flat ceiling, adorned with intricate carvings and calligraphy, Ornate marble inlays and jali (lattice) work. And a central throne area, surrounded by beautifully crafted arches and pillars. It exemplifies the unique blend of Mughal, Persian, and Indian architectural styles, reflecting the empire's rich cultural heritage.

JAMA MASJID

The Jama Masjid, the largest in India, is opposite Red Fort. It was built on a small hillock (HauzJa Pahad). The construction began under the superintendence of Sadullah Khan, Shah Jahan's Prime Minister (Chandra 158). It is an extended and larger version of the Jami Masjid at Fatehpur Sikri and thus becomes the largest building of its kind in India, was commissioned by Emperor Shah Jahan and built by 5,000 artisans under architect Ustad Khalil's expertise and completed in six years. It was inaugurated on July 23, 1656, by Sayed Abdul Ghafoor Shah Bukharil, a revered Bukhara mullah. The mosque's construction cost a staggering one million rupees. It is strategically located in Old Delhi, situated on Chawri Bazar road, opposite the Red Fort and in axis with the Taj Mahal, approximately 500 meters west of the Red Fort, the mosque stands perpendicular to one of the city's main urban axes. In the mosque architecture of this period we can discern two main types, which had already become distinct in Jahangiri architecture. The first, with massive pishtaq prayer-hall surmounted by either three or five domes, is used most conspicuously for the great city mosques, the jami masjid, it may also be equipped with multiple minarets. The second, lighter type is based on the additive grid system of vaulted bays, and may appear without pishtaq and outer domes; it has no minarets. This form preferred for smaller mosques with a special imperial connotation (Koch 117-118).

The Jama Masjid stands majestically on a high stone platform, accessible by stairs from three sides. Facing west towards Mecca, its stunning architecture features open arched colonnades, three marble domes with black and white stripes, and two 40m-high minarets. The main prayer hall boasts seven arched entrances, a traditional mihrab, and marble-covered walls. Measuring 80m x 27m, the mosque has a spacious 408 sq. ft. courtyard capable of accommodating 25,000 worshippers.

It has three grand entrance gates, each serving a distinct purpose. The Southern gate, with 33 steps, was reserved for the general public, while the Northern gate, with 39 steps, was exclusively for nobles. The Eastern gate, also known as the Royal gate, featuring 35 steps, was reserved for Mughal emperors and later, during the British era, only for royal visitors and the Viceroy of India. Situated southeast of an artificial lake, the mosque was constructed on the sloping terrain of the Vindhyan hill ranges. Built on elevated ground, the mosque stands 10 meters above the surrounding city, its plinth carefully crafted to accommodate the natural slope. This strategic placement not only emphasizes the mosque's grandeur but also provides a commanding view of the city. The central courtyard can accommodate more than 25,000 worshippers, making it one of the largest mosques in India.

The Jama Masjid measuring is 80m x 27m, its main prayer hall has seven arched entrances facing Mecca. The central arch simply reads "The Guide!" A 260-column hall showcases Jain and Hindu architectural influences, while floral and calligraphic ornamentations adorn the arches, walls, and domes.

The building material used here is red sandstone with white marble for revetments and for inlaying the frames of panels, showcasing a masterful blend of architectural elegance and cultural richness.

II. CONCLUSION

The monuments of Mughal architecture from Akbar to Shah Jahan (1556-1658) represent a transformative era of artistic and cultural expression, profoundly influencing India's architectural landscape and leaving a lasting legacy. Akbar's innovative style, blending Indian, Persian, and Islamic elements, is evident in Fatehpur Sikri's Buland Darwaza, Agra Fort's Diwan-i-Khas, and Diwan-i-Am, showcasing his vision of a syncretic culture. Jahangir's elegant creations, such as Akbar's Tomb, Tomb of Itmad-Ud-Daulah and Shalimar Gardens, introduced marble and pietra dura techniques, setting a new standard for Mughal aesthetics.

Shah Jahan's majestic projects – the Taj Mahal, Red Fort, and Jama Masjid – epitomized Mughal grandeur, featuring flawless proportions, intricate ornamentation, and a harmonious blend of red sandstone and white marble. The Taj Mahal's perfect proportions, calligraphic inscriptions, and gemstone inlays redefined architectural excellence. The Red Fort's imposing walls, ornate palaces, and beautifully landscaped gardens showcased imperial power. The Jama Masjid's vast courtyard, ornate arches, and towering minarets demonstrated the emperor's commitment to Islamic architecture.

These monuments demonstrate exceptional craftsmanship, engineering skills, and cultural synthesis, reflecting the emperors' vision, patronage, and passion for beauty. Their legacy extends beyond India, influencing architecture globally and cementing their status as timeless masterpieces of world architecture and enduring symbols of India's rich cultural heritage, attracting millions of visitors and inspiring awe and admiration for centuries.

REFERENCE

- [1]. Asher, Catherine B., *The New Cambridge History of India: Architecture of Mughal*, 1st Ed., Cambridge University Press, 1992
- [2]. Brown, Percy, *Indian Architecture*, 7th Ed., D.B. Taraporevala sons and Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1981
- [3]. Chandra, Satish, *History of Architecture and Ancient Building Materials in India*, Tech books International 2003
- [4]. Havell, E.B., & *Handbook to Agra and the Taj*, Longmans, Green and Co., 1904
- [5]. Husain, M. A., *An Historical Guide to the Agra Fort*, Manager of Publication, 1937
- [6]. Koch, Ebba, *Mughal Architecture: An Outline of its History and Development (1526-1858)*, Prestel, 1990
- [7]. Majumdar, R.C., Raychaudhuri, H.C., and Datta Kalikinkar, *An Advanced History of India. Part II. Medieval India*, 2nd Ed., Macmillan and Co-Ltd, 1951
- [8]. Mukhia, Harbans, *The Mughals of India*, 1st Ed., Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004.
- [9]. Nath, R., *History of Mughal Architecture*, V. III, 1st Ed, Abhinav Publications, 1994
- [10]. Nath, R., *Some aspect of Mughals Architecture*, Abhinav Publication, 1976.
- [11]. Page, J. B., *Indian Islamic Architecture*, Brill, 2008
- [12]. Rizvi, S.A.A., *Fatehpur Sikri*, ASI, New Delhi, 1972
- [13]. Saksena, Banarsi Brasad, *History of Shah Jahan*, Bharatiya Kala. Prakashan, 2013
- [14]. Singh, Shivani
- [15]. Smith, Edmund W., *Mughal Architecture of Fatehpur Sikri*, part II, Indological Book House, Delhi, 1973
- [16]. Smith, V.A., *Akbar: The Great Mogul*, 2nd Ed, Oxford University Press, 1962..

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1]. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i- Akbari*, Vol. III. (translated H.S. Jarrett), Calcutta, 1894.
- [2]. Chandra, Satish, *Medieval India: From. Sultanate to Mughals*, 2nd Ed., Har-anand, 2000
- [3]. Majumdar, R.C., *History and culture of the Indian People*, Vol. VII: *The Mughal Empire*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1974
- [4]. Sahai, Surendra, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period (1192-1857)*, Prakash Books India Ltd., New Delhi, 2004.
- [5]. Sharma, S.R., *Mughal Empire in India*, 1st Ed., Karnatak Publishing