



**Babur (1526-1530)**

A conqueror from Central Asia who, following a series of setbacks, finally succeeded in laying the basis for the Mughal dynasty in the Indian subcontinent and became the first Mughal emperor. He was a direct descendant of Turco-Mongol conqueror Timur (Tamurlane) from the Barlas clan, through his father, and also a descendant of Genghis Khan through his mother. He was also influenced by Persian culture and this affected both his own actions and those of his successors. In 1523 he captured the city of Delhi. He reigned over an empire extending from Afghanistan in the west to much of northern India in the east. Babur died at the age of 47 on 5 January 1531, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Humayun. After death, his body was moved to Kabul, Afghanistan where it lies in Bagh-e Babur (Babur Gardens).



**Akbar (1556-1605)**

Was a Mughal Emperor from 1556 until his death. He was the third and one of the greatest rulers of the Mughal Dynasty in India. Akbar succeeded his father, Humayun, under a regent, Bairam Khan, who helped the young emperor expand and consolidate Mughal domains in India. A strong personality and a successful general, Akbar gradually enlarged the Mughal Empire to include nearly all of the Indian Subcontinent north of the Godavari river. His power and influence, however, extended over the entire country because of Mughal military, political, cultural, and economic dominance. To unify the vast Mughal state, Akbar established a centralized system of administration throughout his empire and adopted a policy of appeasing conquered rulers through marriage and diplomacy. In order to preserve peace and order in a religiously and culturally diverse empire, he adopted policies that won him the support of his non-Muslim subjects. He was religiously tolerant in an effort to reduce tensions between Hindus and Muslims. He encouraged divine faith which focused on the emperor.





**Aurangzeb (1658-1707)**

The sixth Mughal Emperor who ruled over most of the Indian subcontinent during some parts of his reign. His reign lasted for 49 years from 1658 until his death in 1707. Aurangzeb was a notable expansionist and during his reign, the Mughal Empire temporarily reached its greatest extent. During his lifetime, victories in the south expanded the Mughal Empire to more than 3.2 million square kilometers (1,235,527 square miles) and he ruled over a population estimated as being in the range of 100–150 million subjects. He pursued a policy of riding the empire from Hindu influences. Due to this policy the empire began to decline. When Aurangzeb died, after a reign of nearly 49 years, he left an empire not yet in full decline but challenged with a number of menacing problems. The failure of his son's successors to cope with them led to the collapse of the empire in the mid-18th century.



**Shah Jahan (1628-1658)**

The fifth Mughal Emperor of India that ruled from 1628 to 1658. Born Prince Khurram, he was the son of Emperor Jahangir. He was chosen as successor to the throne after the death of his father in 1627. He was considered one of the greatest Mughals of the Timur family. Like his grandfather, Akbar, he was eager to expand his vast empire. In 1658, he fell ill and was kept by his son and successor Aurangzeb in Agra Fort until his death in 1666. The period of his reign was considered the golden age of Mughal architecture. Shah Jahan erected many monuments, the best known of which is the Taj Mahal at Agra, built in 1632–1654 as a tomb for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal.



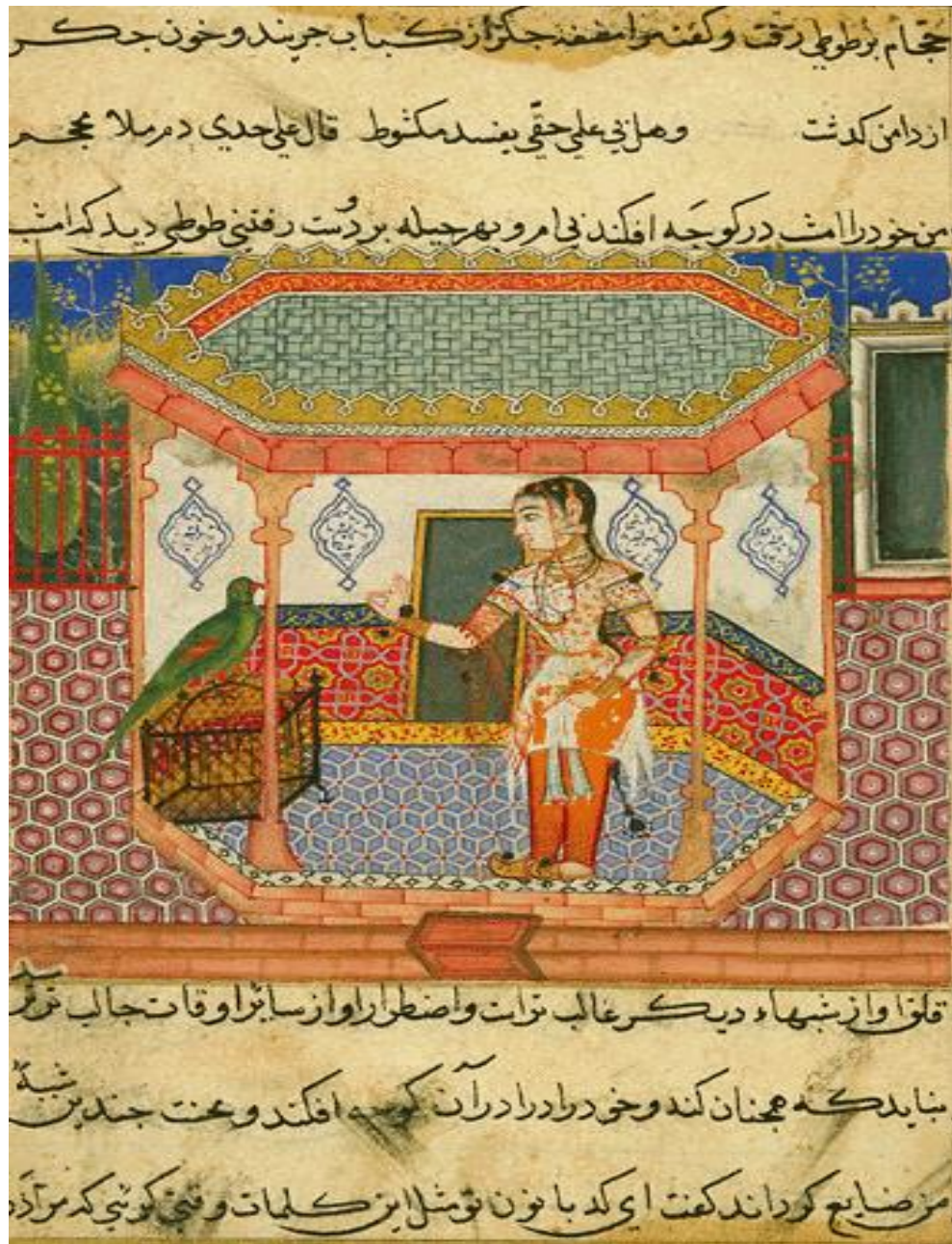


**Taj Mahal**

The Taj Mahal was commissioned by Shah Jahan in 1631, to be built in the memory of his consort Mumtaz Mahal, a Persian princess who died giving birth to their 14th child. Construction of the Taj Mahal began in 1632. The imperial court documenting Shah Jahan's grief after the death of Mumtaz Mahal illustrates the love story held as the inspiration for Taj Mahal. The principal mausoleum was completed in 1643 and the surrounding buildings and garden were finished about five years later

The Taj Mahal incorporates and expands on design traditions of Persian and earlier Mughal architecture. Specific inspiration came from successful Timurid and Mughal buildings. The tomb is the central focus of the entire complex of the Taj Mahal. It is a large, white marble structure standing on a square plinth and consists of a symmetrical building with an *iwan* (an arch-shaped doorway) topped by a large dome and finial. Like most Mughal tombs, the basic elements are Persian in origin.

The exterior decorations of the Taj Mahal are among the finest in Mughal architecture. As the surface area changes, the decorations are refined proportionally. The decorative elements were created by applying paint, stucco, stone inlays or carvings. In line with the Islamic prohibition against the use of iconography, the decorative elements can be grouped into either calligraphy, abstract forms or vegetative motifs. Throughout the complex are passages from the Qur'an that comprise some of the decorative elements. Recent scholarship suggests that the passages were chosen by Amanat Khan. The calligraphy on the Great Gate reads "*O Soul, thou art at rest. Return to the Lord at peace with Him, and He at peace with you.*"



**Mughal Art**

The art style of the Mughals was confined mainly to book illustrations and the production of individual miniatures, which evolved in India during the reign of the Mughal emperors (16th–18th century). In its initial phases it showed some acknowledgment to the Şafavid school of Persian painting but rapidly moved away from Persian ideals. Probably the earliest example of Mughal painting is the illustrated folktale *Tuti-nameh* (“Tales of a Parrot”) seen today at the Cleveland (Ohio) Museum of Art. Mughal painting was essentially a court art; it developed under the patronage of the ruling Mughal emperors and began to decline when the rulers lost interest. The subjects treated were generally secular, consisting of illustrations to historical works and Persian and Indian literature, portraits of the emperor and his court, studies of natural life, and general scenes.



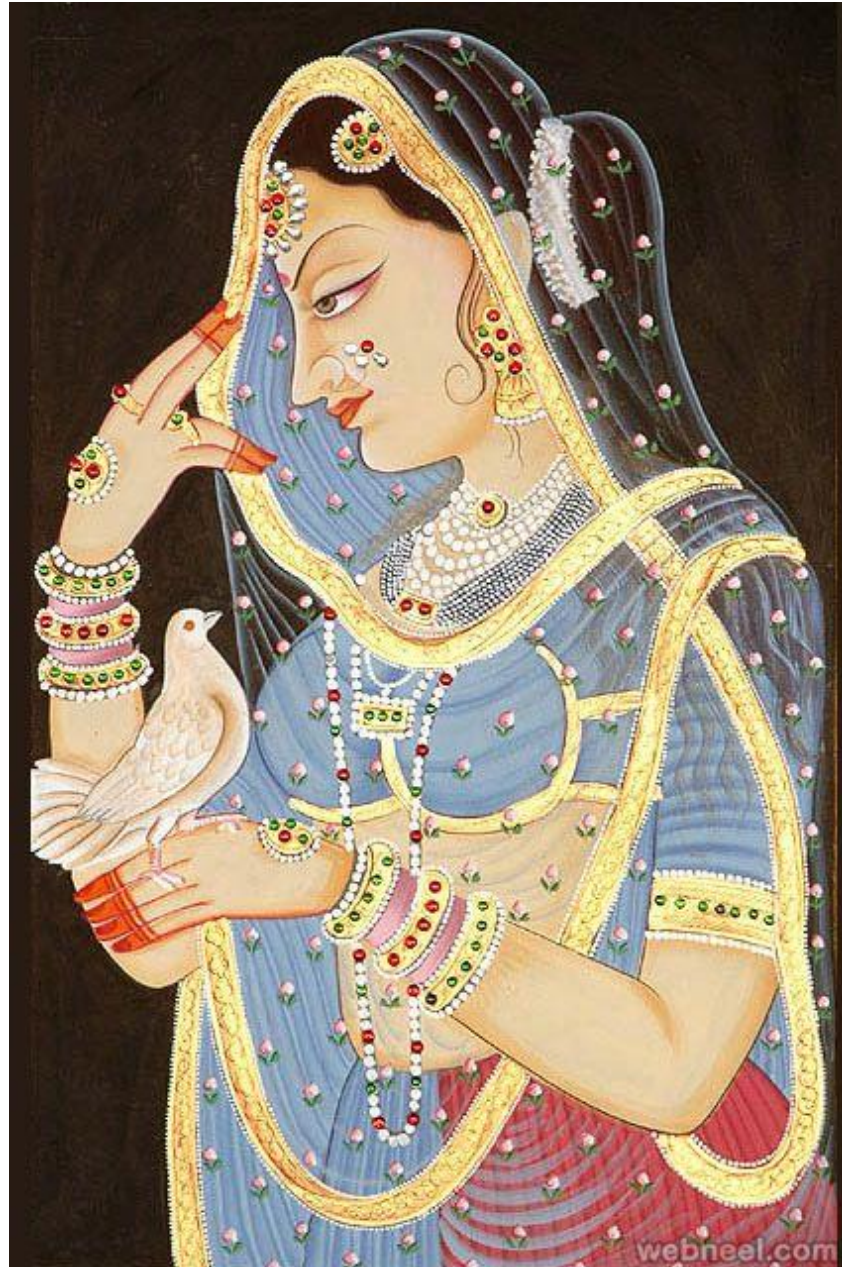


**Contact with the West**



India had fallen behind Europeans in terms of military training, science, & inventions; however, Mughal India did become a major trade center with Europe. Cotton textiles in particular were coveted by the Europeans. Indian textiles became popular among the working and the middle classes in Europe, especially in Britain. Indian cloth came into fashion in royal courts under Queen Anne and Queen Mary. The Portuguese, English, and later on, the Dutch were the three major European trade partners with the Mughal Empire. The contact with the west would eventually lead to direct British involvement with India via the British East Indies Company in the mid-1600s.

Even though the Mughal's traded with the west their main focus lied elsewhere. As the first Islamic power on the Indian subcontinent, the Mughal Empire was more interested in assimilating the land, studying the history, customs and religion of the people occupying this area, and communicating with the other two Islamic empires – the Saffavid and the Ottoman Empires.



**Women in the Mughal Empire**

During the reign of Akbar women saw a tremendous amount of reform. Akbar encouraged women who had lost their husbands to remarry. At this time remarriage was considered taboo (forbidden) for both Hindu and Muslim women. Child marriage was discouraged. This was a common practice among the ruling elite. Due to this Akbar made no effort to outlaw the practice but instead disapproved of it. This meant there was little to no effect on the practice. His most controversial reform was to legally ban the practice of sati. This was the Hindu practice of burning the wives on the funeral pyres of their deceased husbands. This practice was deeply entrenched in the warrior classes, who were Akbar's allies. Akbar also encouraged markets to set aside a single day for only women to shop.

Later in the middle years of the dynasty upper classes women had power at court. They influenced officials. Despite the advances made by Akbar and others after him the role of women began to revert back in the middle years of Mughal dynasty. Women became more secluded and the practices that had been outlawed or discouraged returned in greater strength.