

8

LIFE IN MUGHAL TIMES

In the previous chapters you learned about Mughal rule in India. In this chapter you will read about the social, economic, cultural and religious changes that occurred during the Mughal period.

India was known the world Wide as a rich country during the Mughal period. Its wealth attracted people from several countries. European merchants too came to earn profits through trade. They later established their rule over India.

Social conditions

The richest and most powerful people during the Mughal period were the emperor, his family, the *amirs* and the Rajput kings. The emperor was the highest authority in the Mughal court and led a very luxurious life.

The *amirs*

The *amirs* or nobles were people holding high positions in court. They were ministers, generals and governors of various provinces and included Turks, Iranians, Indian Muslims and Rajput kings. They were granted *jagirs* of several villages for the work they did. They retained a large part of the revenue collected from the villages and lived lives of luxury in grand palaces. They Amirs were Turks, Iranian, Indian muslims and Rajput kings.

Middle class

The cities had a large middle class comprising minor officers, soldiers, merchants etc. Some merchants were very rich.

In the villages the *zamindars* were very powerful. They assisted the government in collecting taxes and kept the emperor informed about the woes of the peasants. They also collected other levies from the peasants in addition to land taxes.

The largest section of the village population comprised peasants, craftsman, labourers, servants etc. These people mostly lead a life of poverty. They were the most exploited section of society and had to constantly face the atrocities of the *zamindars* and *jagirdars*.

In Chhattisgarh

The Kalchuris ruled Chhattisgarh during this period. Brahmins had a high status in society because they performed religious rites and also educated the people. The kings donated villages to them. The *kshatriyas* were the rulers and warriors. The others social classes also held respected positions. Thus there was no social discrimination in Chhattisgarhi society during this period.

Hindu and Muslim men dressed similarly, although there were differences in the mode of dressing between the villages and the cities.

What differences are there in the dress of Hindu and Muslim women? Discuss in class.

Festivals and fairs

Many festivals and fairs were celebrated during the Mughal period. Hindus and Muslims celebrated these festivals together, the main ones being Dassera, Diwali, Holi, Eid, Navroz, Muharram etc. Akbar participated in Hindu and Muslim festivals, which were celebrated in his court.

Fairs organized in large cities like Delhi, Agra, Lucknow etc attracted people in large numbers. *Urs* was also organized every year at the *mazars* of sufi saints. Other festive occasions celebrated with much fanfare were the emperor's birthday, marriages in the royal family, etc.

Religious conditions

The Mughal emperors were followers of Islam, but they respected all religions. Emperor Akbar and Jahangir studied other religions to understand them better. They invited Hindu *sadhus*, Jain *munis*, Christian priests and Muslim *maulvis* to their court for discourses on religion and fostered religious tolerance. Akbar even had books of other religions translated into Persian so that his courtiers could understand these religions better. Tulsidas, Kabirdas, Surdas, Meera Bai, Rahim and Guru Nank were the saints of this period who preached respect for all religions.

It was during the Mughal period that the Kabir *panthis* came to Chhattisgarh. They spread their ideas in the villages, influencing the lives of the people. Damakheda, situated 55km from Raipur on the Raipur-Bilaspur highway, is a major pilgrimage spot of the Kabir *panthis*. Devi Puja or the worship of Shakti, also became widespread in Chhattisgarh during the reign of the Kalchuri kings. The brahmins - priests, astrologers and mystics, who were the spiritual and intellectual guides of the kings - played a major role in their spread. Well known goddesses included Mahamaya of Ratanpur, Bamleshewari Devi of Dongargarh and Danteshwari Devi of Dantewada. Matadevala had special significance in villages while Rajivlochan of Rajim and Doodhadhari Mandir of Raipur were recognized as places of faith and worship.

Economic conditions

As in earlier times, agriculture continued to remain the main economic activity of the people during the Mughal period. However, the peasants began cultivating many new crops in addition to their traditional crops. Before the Mughal time, Indian peasants did not know about vegetables like potatoes, pumpkins, tomatoes, peas, etc. These vegetables were brought from South America by European merchants.

The peasants had to pay a large portion of their produce as taxes. The amount was one-third the value of produce during Akbar's reign, but it kept

increasing. The *zamindars* also collected several other levies from them. So the economic condition of the peasants was quite miserable, although some of them were well off and prosperous.

Trade

Apart from agriculture, people were engaged in several other trades. The textile industry developed during the 17th century. Muslin cloth from Dhaka, the *zari* work of Benaras, cotton from Bengal, Bihar and Gujarat and the woollens of Kashmir were famous around the world.

Trade flourished in different parts of India from ancient times and trade relations were developed with many foreign countries. Merchants from these countries would buy cotton, indigo, opium and black pepper from India and sell gold, silver, raw silk, velvet, etc here.

Merchants from Portugal, England and France came to India in 16th and 17th centuries. They came by the sea route, which was discovered in 1498 by a Portuguese sailor named Vasco da Gama. Indian merchants welcomed European traders as this gave them access to the European markets.

Art and Literature

The Mughal era has a special place in the history of Indian art and culture. Architecture, paintings, music and literature flourished during this period.

There was outstanding development in the field of architecture. One can see a beautiful blend of traditional Indian forms and Persian and central Asian architecture in several buildings of this period. Its striking aspects include the scale and proportion of buildings, their magnificence and their landscaped gardens. The

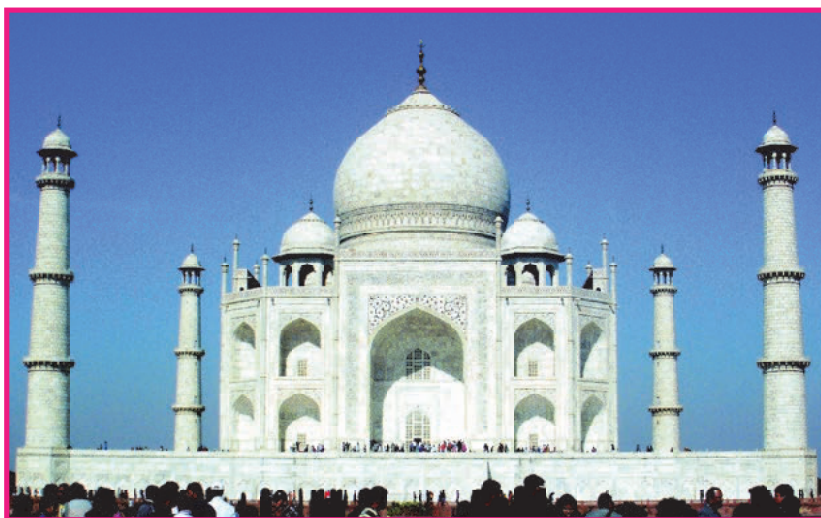


Fig.: 8.1 Taj Mahal, Agra

buildings, constructed on raised platforms, used red and white marble and had domes of various shapes, decorated arches, broad drooping eaves and other decorative features.

Humayun's Tomb in Delhi is a mixture of Indian and Persian architecture. Akbar established the city of Fatehpur Sikri and built the Red Fort in Agra. He had the Buland Darwaza, Jama Masjid and Tomb of Skeikh Salim Chisti con-

structed at Fatepur Sikri. White marble was widely used in architecture during Shah Jahan's time, the well known buildings including the five-storeyed residential Panch Mahal built on pillars and the *Diwan-e-Khas* where he held private meetings for personal discussions. But the most famous building of the time was the Taj Mahal, which Shah Jahan constructed at Agra in memory of his wife. It is a magnificent building, with beautiful carvings of flowers and leaves studied with precious stones. It has large gardens on all sides. Shah Jahan is also remembered for the Peacock throne and the famous Kohinoor diamond.



Fig.: 8.2 Buland Darwaza, Fatehpur Sikri

The Mughal emperors were fond of gardens with beautiful fountains. Jahangir had several well known gardens laid out, including the Nishat Garden in Kashmir, Tanjore Garden in Punjab and Shalimar Garden in Lahore. The Mughals were known for their use of flowing water in their gardens and they constructed beautiful fountains in many places.



Fig. 8.3 Red Fort, Delhi

Shah Jahan had the Jama Masjid and Red Fort constructed in Delhi. The *Diwan-e-Khas* and *Diwan-e-Aam* of this fort are famous. Even today, some of our national festivals are organized in this fort.

Gondwana and Chhattisgarh also have some examples of Mughal architecture, or buildings influenced by this architectural style, the kingdoms of Garha Mandla and Ratanpur being prominent among them.

EXERCISES

I. Fill in the blanks -

1. During the Mughal period the _____ was the supreme head of the government.
2. _____ ruled Chhattisgarh during the Mughal period.
3. _____ was the main occupation of people during the Mughal period.
4. _____ built the Red Fort at Delhi.

II. Answer the following questions.

1. Which trades developed during the 17th century?
2. The use of flowing water was the specialty of which period?
3. Where was the capital of Akbar's empire situated?
4. In which period was white marble used?
5. Name the place where the emperor held personal discussions.
6. Where is the famous Shalimar Garden situated?
7. Into which classes was society divided during the Mughal period?
8. What clothes did people wear during the Mughal period?
9. What trades were people engaged in during the Mughal period?
10. Which festivals were celebrated during the Mughal period?
11. Describe the social and religious conditions of Chhattisgarh during the Mughal period.
12. What are the architectural specialties of the Mughal period.

Things to do

Collect pictures of buildings constructed during the Mughal period. Write the names of rulers who built them and the year in which they were built.



Revision

You read in the previous class early humans used stones and wooden tools to hunt for food. They lived on fruits, tubers and the meat of the animals they hunted.

After some time they learned farming and settled down permanently in one place. They built large, well planned cities with roads and brick houses in the Indus Valley. Many skilled craftsmen lived in these cities. They made tools, utensils and statues out of metals like copper and bronze.



Fig. 1 early man

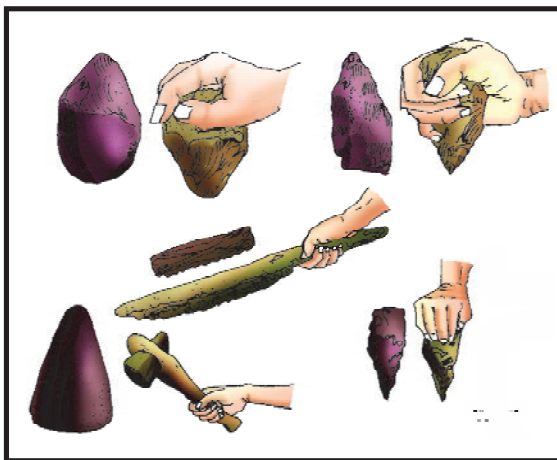


Fig. 2 tools were used by early man

When the cities of the Indus Valley were destroyed, the Aryan culture began developing along the banks of the Indus, Sutlej, Jhelum, Beas and Saraswati rivers. This region was known as the land of seven rivers. The Aryans spoke Sanskrit and their main occupation was cattle rearing. They performed *yagnas* to their gods and goddesses from time to time and also composed the Rigveda.

The Aryan culture gradually spread along the banks of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers. Now their main occupation was farming and began living in villages. *Janpads* were formed. The headman of the *jana* was called the



Fig. 3 Seals used in indus valley

raja and his relatives and colleagues were addressed as 'princes'. They became very powerful and began taking gifts from the farmers and landowners. They performed impressive *yagnas*.

There were 16 large *janpads* or *mahajanpads* about 2,600 years ago. Of these Kaushal, Vatsa and Magadha were the most powerful. Some of these *mahajanpads* were ruled by kings (monarchies) but some were governed by the people themselves (republics). Trade flourished in the *mahajanpads* and many of them began using metal coins as currency.

The villages slowly grew into towns and cities. The main cities were Ujjain, Patliputra and Vaishali. It was during this period that Buddha and Mahavir Swami preached Buddhism and Jainism. Alexander, the king of Greece, also attacked the north-west region around this time.



fig. 4 Ashoka's pillar, Sarnath



Fig. 5 Laxman's temple at Sirpur

among the common people by engraving them on stone pillars and rocks across his empire.

The Mauryan dynasty subsequently established a large empire in north India. Emperor Ashoka was the most famous king of this dynasty. He tried to win the hearts of his people by following the path of religion and peace rather than the path of war and violence. He spread his ideas and thoughts

A few hundred years after Emperor Ashoka's death, the Gupta dynasty of Magadha became very powerful and established a large empire. Samudragupta was an important ruler of this dynasty. He expanded his empire in two ways. He defeated the Aryan kings of north India and merged their kingdoms into his empire. But when he conquered the kings of south India, he did not merge their kingdoms into his empire. Instead, he returned their kingdoms but made them swear an oath of allegiance to the Gupta dynasty.

Once the Gupta dynasty declined, many smaller kings tried to expand their kingdoms. Of these, Harashvardhana of Kannauj was the most famous.

In those days the Chhattisgarh region was called southern Kosala and Shripur (Sirpur) was its capital. The most famous Kosala king was Mahashiva Gupta Balarjuna. Archaeologists and historians refer to this period as the golden age of Chhattisgarh. It was an age of religious tolerance during which Sirpur's famous Lakshman temple was built.

We shall now learn what happened after that

