

**UPSC**  
**Old NCERT Summary (Bipan Chandra)**  
**Mughal Empire- 2**

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## **CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS**

- THERE WAS an outburst of many-sided cultural activity in India under the Mughal rule. The traditions in the field of architecture, painting, literature and music created during this period set a norm and deeply influenced the succeeding generations. In this sense, the Mughal period can be called a second classical age following the Gupta age in northern India. In this cultural development, Indian traditions were amalgamated with the Turko-Iranian culture brought to the country by the Mughals.
- The Timurid court at Samarkand had developed as the cultural centre of West and Central Asia. Babur was conscious of this cultural heritage. He was critical of many of the cultural forms existing in India and was determined to set proper standards.
- The development of art and culture in various regions of India during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had led to a rich and varied development from which it was possible to draw upon. But for this, the cultural efflorescence of the Mughal age would hardly have been possible. Peoples from different areas of India, as well as peoples belonging to different faiths and races contributed to this cultural development in various ways. In this sense, the culture developed during the period was tending towards a truly national culture.

## **ARCHITECTURE**

- The Mughals built magnificent forts, palaces, gates, public buildings, mosques, baolis (water tank or well), etc. They also laid out many formal gardens with running water. In fact, use of running water even in their palaces and pleasure resorts was a special feature of the Mughals. Babur was very fond of gardens and laid out a few in the neighbourhood of Agra and Lahore. Some of the Mughal gardens, such as the Nishat Bagh in Kashmir, the Shalimar at Lahore, the Pinjor garden in the Punjab foothills, etc. have survived to this day. A new impetus to architecture was given by Sher Shah. His famous mausoleum at Sasaram (Bihar) and his mosque in the old fort at Delhi are considered

architectural marvels. They form the climax of the pre-Mughal style of architecture, and the starting point for the new.

- Akbar was the first Mughal ruler who had the time and means to undertake construction on a large scale. He built a series of forts, the most famous of which is the fort at Agra. Built in red sandstone, this massive fort had many magnificent gates. The climax of fort building was reached at Delhi where Shah Jahan built his famous Red Fort.
- In 1572, Akbar commenced a palace-fort complex at Fatehpur Sikri, 36 kilometers from Agra, which he completed in eight years. Built atop a hill, along with a large artificial lake, it included many buildings in the style of Gujarat and Bengal. These included deep eaves, balconies, and fanciful kiosks. In the Panch Mahal built for taking the air, all the types of pillars used in various temples were employed to support flat roofs. The Gujarat style of architecture is used most widely in the palace built probably for his Rajput wife of his wives.
- Buildings of a similar type were also built in the fort at Agra, though only a few of them have survived. Akbar took a close personal interest in the work of construction both at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. Persian or Central Asian influence can be seen in the glazed blue tiles used for decoration in the walls or for tiling the roofs. But the most magnificent building was the mosque and the gateway to it called the Buland Darwaza or the Lofty Gate, built to commemorate Akbar's victory in Gujarat. The gate is in the style of what is called a half-dome portal. What was done was to slice a dome into half. The sliced portion provided the massive outward facade of the gate, while smaller doors could be made in the rear wall where the dome and the floor meet. This device, borrowed from Iran, became a feature in Mughal buildings later.
- With the consolidation of the empire, the Mughal architecture reached its climax. Towards the end of Jahangir's reign began the practice of putting up buildings, entirely of marble and decorating the walls with floral designs made of semi-precious stones. This method of decoration, called pietra dura became even more popular under Shah Jahan who used it on a large scale in the Taj Mahal, justly regarded as a jewel of the builder's art.
- The Taj Mahal brought together in a pleasing manner all the architectural forms developed by the Mughals. Humayun's tomb built at Delhi towards the beginning of Akbar's reign, and which had a massive dome of marble, may be considered a precursor of the Taj. The double dome was another feature of this building. This device enabled a bigger dome to be built with a smaller one inside. The chief glory of the Taj is the massive dome and the four slender minarets linking the platform to the main building. The decorations are kept to a minimum,

delicate marble screens, pietra dura inlay work and kiosks (chhatris) adding to the effect. The building gains by being placed in the midst of a formal garden.

- Mosque-building also reached its climax under Shah Jahan, the two most noteworthy ones being “the Moti Masjid in the Agra fort built like the Taj entirely in marble, and the other the Jama Masjid at Delhi built in red sandstone. A lofty gate tall, slender minarets, and a series of domes are a feature of the Jama Masjid.
- Although not many buildings were built up by Aurangzeb who was economy-minded, the Mughal architectural traditions based on a combination of Hindu and Turk-Iranian forms and decorative designs, continued without a break into the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Thus, Mughal traditions influenced the palaces and forts of many provincial and local kingdoms. Even the Harmandir of the Sikhs, called the Golden Temple at Amritsar which was rebuilt several times during the period was built on the arch and dome principle and incorporated many features of the Mughal traditions of architecture.

## **PAINTING**

- The Mughals made distinctive contribution in the field of painting. They introduced new themes depicting the court, battle scenes and the chase, and added new colours and new forms. They created a living tradition of painting which continued to work in different parts of the country long after the glory of the Mughals had disappeared. The richness of the style, again, was due to the fact that India had an old tradition of painting. The wall-paintings of Ajanta are an eloquent indication of its vigour. After the eighth century, the tradition seems to have decayed, but palm-leaf manuscripts and illustrated Jain texts from the thirteenth century onwards show that the tradition had not died.
- Apart from the Jains, some of the provincial kingdoms, such as Malwa and Gujarat extended their patronage to painting during the fifteenth century. But a vigorous revival began only under Akbar. While at the court the court of the Shah of Iran, Humayun had taken into his service two master painters who accompanied him to India. Under their leadership, during the reign of Akbar, painting was organised in one of the imperial establishments (karkhanas). A large number of painters from different parts of the country were invited, many of them from lowly castes. From the beginning, both Hindus and Muslims joined in the work. Thus Daswant and Basawan were two of the famous painters of Akbar's court. The school developed rapidly, and soon became a celebrated centre of production. Apart from illustrating Persian books of fables, the painters were soon

assigned the task of illustrating the Persian text of the Mahabharata, the historical work Akbar Nama, and others Indian themes and Indian scenes and landscapes, thus, came in vogue and helped to free the school from Persian influence. Indian colours, such as peacock blue, the Indian red, etc. began to be used. Above all, the somewhat flat effect of the Persian style began to be replaced by the roundedness of the Indian brush, giving the pictures a three-dimensional effect.

- Mughal painting hunting, battle and court scenes, under Jahangir, special progress was made in portrait painting and painting of animals. Mansur was the great name in this field. Portrait painting also became fashionable.
- Under Akbar, European painting was introduced at the court by the Portuguese priests. Under their influence, the principles of foreshortening, whereby near and distant people and things could be placed in perspective was quietly adopted.
- While the tradition continued under Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb's lack of interest in painting led to a dispersal of the artists to different places of the country. This helped in the development of painting in the states of Rajasthan and the Punjab hills.
- The Rajasthan style of painting combined the themes and earlier traditions of western India or Jain school of painting with Mughal forms and styles. Thus, in addition to hunting and court scenes, it had paintings on mythological themes, such as the dalliance of Krishna with Radha, or the Barahmasa, that is, the sea songs Ragas (melodies). The Pahari school continued these traditions.

## **LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND MUSIC**

- The important role of Persian and Sanskrit as vehicles of thought and government at the all India level, and the development of regional languages, largely as a result of the growth of the Bhakti Movement, have already been mentioned. Regional languages also developed due to the patronage extended to them by local and regional rulers.
- These trends continued during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the time of Akbar, knowledge of Persian had become so widespread in north India that he dispensed with the tradition of keeping revenue records in the local language (Hindawi) in addition to Persian. However, the tradition of keeping revenue records in the local language continued in the Deccani states till their extinction in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.
- Persian prose and poetry reached a climax under Akbar's reign. Abul Fazl who was a great scholar and a stylist, as well as the leading historian of the age, set a style of prose-writing which was emulated for many

generations. The leading poet of the age was his brother Faizi who also helped in Akbar's translation department. The translation of the Mahabharata was carried out under his supervision. Utbi and Naziri were the two other leading Persian poets.

- Though born in Persia, they were among the many poets and scholars who migrated from Iran to India during the period and made the Mughal court one of the cultural centres of the Islamic world. Hindus also contributed to the growth of Persian literature. Apart from literary and historical works a number of famous dictionaries of the Persian language were also compiled during the period.
- Although not much significant and original work was done in Sanskrit during the period, the number of Sanskrit works produced during the period is quite impressive. As before, most of the works were produced in south and east India under the patronage of local rulers, though a few were produced by brahmanas employed in the translation department of the emperors.
- Regional languages acquired stability and maturity and some of the finest lyrical poetry was produced during this period. The dalliance of Krishna with Radha and the milkmaids, pranks of the child Krishna and stories from Bhagawat figure largely in lyrical poetry in Bengali " Oriya, Hindi, Rajasthani and Gujarat! during this period.
- Many devotional hymns to Rama were also composed and the Mahabharata translated into the regional languages, especially if they had not been translated earlier. A few translations and adaptations from Persian were also made Both Hindus and Muslims contributed in this. Thus, Also composed in Bengal and also translated from Persian. In Hindi, the Padmavat, the story written by the Sufi saint, Malik muhammad Jaisi, used the attack of Alauddin Khalji on Chittor as an allegory to ex pound Sufi ideas on the relations of soul with God, along with Hindu ideas about maya.
- Medieval Hindi in the Brij form, that is the dialect spoken in the neighbourhood of Agra, was also patronised by the Mughal emperors and Hindu rulers. From the time of Akbar, Hindi poets began to be attached to the Mughal court. A leading Mughal noble, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, produced a fine blend of Bhakti poetry with Persian ideas of life and human relations. Thus, the Persian and the Hindi literary traditions began to influence each other. But the most influential Hindi poet was Tulsidas whose hero was Rama and who used a dialect of Hindi spoken in the eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh. Pleading for a modified caste system based not on birth but on individual qualities, Tulsi was essentially humanistic poet who upheld family ideals and complete devotion to Rama as a way of salvation open to all, irrespective of caste.

- In south India, Malyalam started its literary career as a separate language in its own right. Marathi reached its apogee at the hands of Eknath and Tukaram. Asserting the importance of Marath, Eknath exclaims. "If Sanskrit was made by God, was Prakrit bom of thieves and knaves? Let these errings of vanity along. God is no partisan of tongues. To Him Prakrit and Sanskrit are alike. My language Marathi is worthy of expressing the highest sentiments and is rich laden with the fruits of divine knowledge."
- This undoubtedly expresses the sentiments of all those writing in local language. It also shows the confidence and the status acquired by these languages. Due to the writings of the Sikh Gurus, Punjabi received a new life.

## MUSIC

- Another branch of cultural life in which Hindus and Muslims cooperated was music. Akbar patronize Tansen of Gwalior who is credited with composing many new melodies (ragas). Jahangir and Shah Jahan as well as many Mughal nobles followed this example. There are many apocryphal stories about the burial of music by the orthodox Aurangzeb.
- Recent research shows the Aurangzeb banished singing from his court, but not playing of musical instruments. In fact, Aurangzeb himself was an accomplished veena player. Music in all forms continued to be patronized by Aurangzeb's queens in the harem and by the noble. That is why the larges number of books on classical Indian music in Persian were written during Aurangzeb's reign. But some of the most important development in the field of music took place later on in the eighteenth century during the reign of Muhammad Shah (1719-48).