

# Medieval India (C) The Mughal Empire



### SYLLABUS

#### Medieval India (C) The Mughal Empire

Sources: *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Taj Mahal*, *Jama Masjid* and *Red Fort*.

Political history and administration (*Babur*, *Akbar* and *Aurangzeb*).

On the eve of Babur's invasion of India in 1526, India was ruled by breakaway kingdoms of the Delhi Sultanate and there was no powerful central authority. Bengal, Jaunpur, Gujarat, Malwa and Mewar had all become independent. These States were always fighting against one another with the result that a sense of insecurity and tension reigned supreme throughout the country. However, these regional kingdoms, one by one, came under the control of the Mughals.

### SOURCES

The main sources of information about the Mughals are:

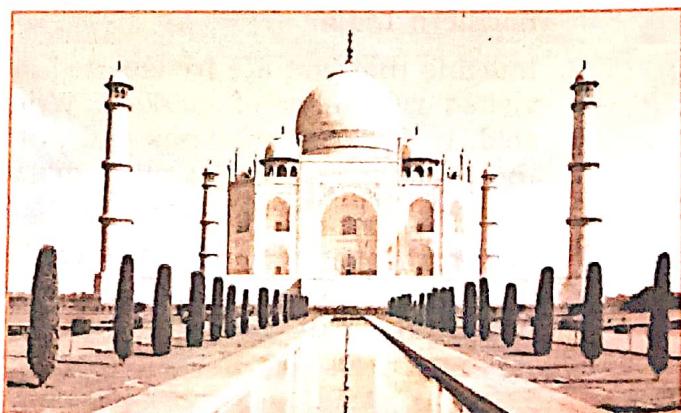
**1. Ain-i-Akbari:** It was written by Abul Fazl, the minister and one of the nine jewels at Akbar's court. It was a part of a large project of history writing commissioned by Akbar. It is regarded as a precious source of information about the administration and culture during the reign of Akbar.

The *Ain-i-Akbari* is divided into five books. The first book deals with the imperial household. The second book deals with the servants of the emperor, the military and civil services. The third book deals with the imperial administration.

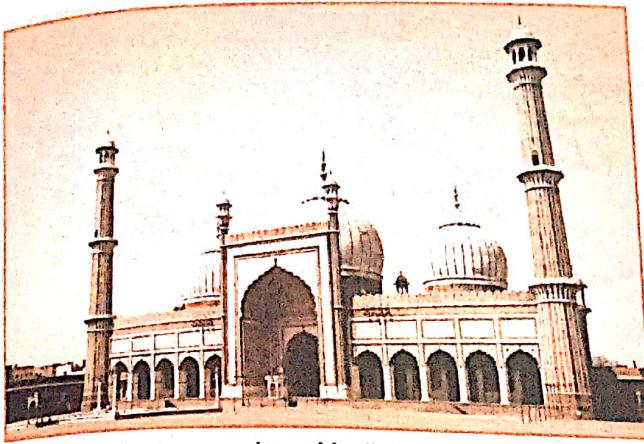
It consists of the regulations for the judicial and executive departments, and the divisions of the empire. The fourth book contains information about Hindu philosophy, science, social customs and literature. The fifth book contains the wise sayings of Akbar. This also contains an account of the ancestry and biography of the author, Abul Fazl.

**2. The Taj Mahal, Agra:** It was built by Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal. It is the mausoleum of both Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan. It is built at Agra on the banks of the River Yamuna. It was designed by Ustad Isha Khan and it is made of pure white marble. The main structure is constructed on a high platform. On each of the four corners of this platform there is a minaret. The central dome rises to a height of 56.1 metres. The interior has an octagonal chamber. The marble dome in the centre looks like an inverted lotus. The actual graves are in lower chamber, underground.

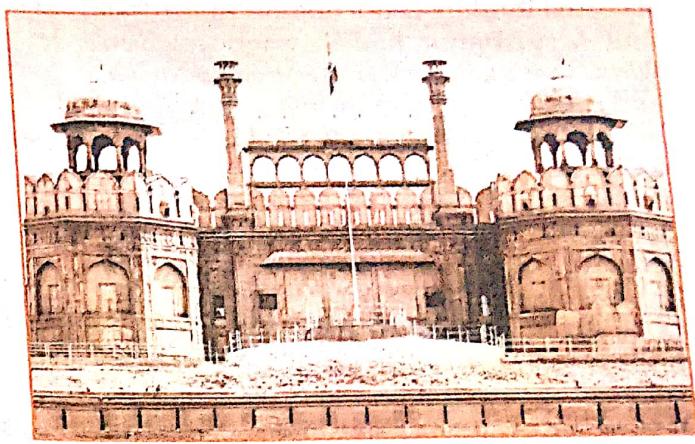
The entire structure of Taj Mahal is made of marble and the walls are decorated with floral designs made of semi-precious stones. This



Taj Mahal



Jama Masjid



Red Fort, Delhi

method of decoration is called *pietra dura*. The Taj Mahal brought together all the architectural forms developed by the Mughals like massive domes of marble, *pietra dura* inlay work and kiosks (chhatris).

Taj Mahal was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983 and was declared as one of the Seven Wonders of the World in 2007.

**3. The Jama Masjid:** It was built by Shah Jahan and is the biggest mosque in India. Its courtyard has the capacity to accommodate thousands of people at a time. It is built on a lofty basement with majestic flights of steps leading to the imposing gateways on three sides of the courtyard. It has three gateways, four towers and two 40m high minarets constructed of red sandstone and white marble. The northern gate has 39 steps, the eastern gate has 35 steps and the southern gate has 33 steps. The face of its spacious prayer-hall consists of eleven arches of which the central arch rises far above the roof level.

**4. The Red Fort, Delhi:** It was built by Shah Jahan after he decided to shift his capital to Delhi. It is located on the banks of the Yamuna. Red sandstone and marble were used in its construction. The fort has massive walls and two gateways. The Western Gateway is known as the *Lahori Gate*. This gate was used for the emperor's ceremonial purposes. Among the many impressive buildings in the complex are Diwan-i-Aam and Diwan-i-Khas. The Diwan-i-Khas is the lavishly ornamented hall where the Peacock Throne was placed. The hall was used by the emperor to give audience

to the princes of the royal family, nobles and other important dignitaries. Aurangzeb later built the Moti Masjid in the Red Fort. It is made of pure marble. The Red Fort is an important historical monument. Many historical events are connected with this fort. The Prime Minister of India every year hoists the national flag from its ramparts on Independence Day (August 15).

### MUGHAL DYNASTY

#### BABUR

Babur, whose full name was Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, was a descendant of Timur, the Mongol Ruler. At Kabul, he carved out a small principality for himself. Having established himself at Kabul, Babur turned his eyes upon India.

Daulat Khan Lodhi, the Governor of Punjab invited Babur to oust Ibrahim Lodhi from the throne. In the First Battle of Panipat (1526), Babur



Babur

defeated Ibrahim Lodhi and occupied Delhi and Agra. Babur had to wage two other wars, one against Rana Sanga of Mewar, and the other against the eastern Afghans, before he could consolidate his hold on this area. The *Battle of Khanwa* (1527) was fiercely fought between Babur and Rana Sanga's forces. Rana Sanga's forces were defeated. The *Battle of Khanwa* secured Babur's position in the Delhi-Agra region. In 1529, Babur met the combined forces of the Afghans and Nusrat Shah of Bengal at the *Battle of Ghagra*, near the junction of Ghagra river with the Ganges. Babur crossed the river and compelled the Bengal and the Afghan armies to retreat. However, he could not win a decisive victory. He died in 1530, even before he could stabilise the Mughal empire.

### **Akbar 2nd battle Bairam Khan**

He was the greatest of Mughal rulers of India. He was only thirteen years old when he ascended the throne and was guided by his tutor, Bairam Khan. Akbar succeeded to a difficult position and had to virtually reconquer his empire. The Afghans were regrouping their forces under the leadership of Hemu, the Wazir of Adil Shah, for a final showdown with the Mughals. In the *Second Battle of Panipat*, the Mughal forces led by Bairam Khan defeated Hemu. After having established himself in Delhi and Agra, Akbar captured Malwa and Gondwana, Bengal, Gujarat, Kashmir and Kabul. He ventured beyond the Vindhyas in Deccan and after a stiff resistance, defeated many local rulers. Finally Ahmadnagar, Berar and Khandesh were annexed



P.C

to the Mughal empire. He also subdued the Rajput princes, except Mewar. As a result, the famous *Battle of Haldighati* was fought in 1576 between Maharana Pratap, the ruler of Mewar and the Mughal army led by Raja Man Singh. Maharana Pratap fought with matchless courage but had to escape from the battlefield when he was heavily wounded.

Akbar died in 1605. By the time Akbar died, his authority had extended from Assam in the east to the areas beyond the north-western frontier, i.e., Kabul and Kandahar in the west. In the Deccan his dominions included Ahmadnagar, Khandesh and Berar. The Kingdoms of Multan, Sindh, Gujarat, Kashmir and Bengal ceased to exist.

**Akbar's Rajput Policy:** The Rajput policy of Akbar proved to be one of his greatest achievements. He entered into marriage alliances with the Rajputs. Bhara Mal, the ruler of Amber, married his younger daughter, Harkha Bai to Akbar. Akbar not only gave complete religious freedom to his wives who followed Hinduism but also gave an honoured place to their parents and relations in the nobility. Thus, the Rajput policy of Akbar ended the centuries-old animosity between the Muslim rulers and the Rajputs. Since the Rajputs were made equal partners in the Mughal government, it considerably affected the public policies of the Mughals and greatly helped in the growth of a composite culture.

**Steps Towards Integration:** Akbar took a number of measures to promote greater understanding between the Hindus and the



Akbar

Muslims. Through these measures he created an atmosphere in which liberal views could grow and finally cultural and emotional integration of the people could develop. Some of these measures were the following:

1. Akbar abolished the poll tax or *jizyah*, which the non-Muslims were required to pay. He also abolished the pilgrim tax on bathing at holy places such as Prayag and Benaras. Further, he abolished the practice of forcibly converting prisoners of war to Islam. All these steps laid the foundation of a society based on equal rights to all citizens, irrespective of their religious beliefs.
2. To strengthen the liberal principles, Akbar enrolled a number of Hindus into the nobility. While most of these were Rajput rajas, many of whom entered into matrimonial alliances with Akbar, *mansabs* (position or rank) were given to others on the basis of their competence.
- In 1575, Akbar built a hall called *Ibadat Khana* or the Hall of Prayer at Fatehpur Sikri. At this hall, he used to call selected theologians of all religions, mystics and intellectuals and discuss religious and spiritual matters with them.
4. Akbar issued a 'Declaration' or *mahzar*, which made Akbar the supreme or final arbiter in religious matters and replaced the power of the ulema by the power of the Emperor.



Akbar in the Ibadat Khana

5. Akbar promulgated a new faith called *Din-i-Illahi*. It was based on the principle of oneness of God. The new religion stressed on virtues like courage, loyalty and justice. It also demanded loyalty to the Emperor. The basic purpose of forming *Din-i-Illahi* was *Sulh-kul* or universal harmony which governed all public policies of Akbar.

6. Akbar set up a large translation department for translating works in Sanskrit, Arabic and Greek into Persian. Thus, the *Singhasan Battisi*, the *Atharva Veda* and the *Bible* were taken up for translation. These were followed by the *Quran*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Gita* and the *Ramayana*.

### SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

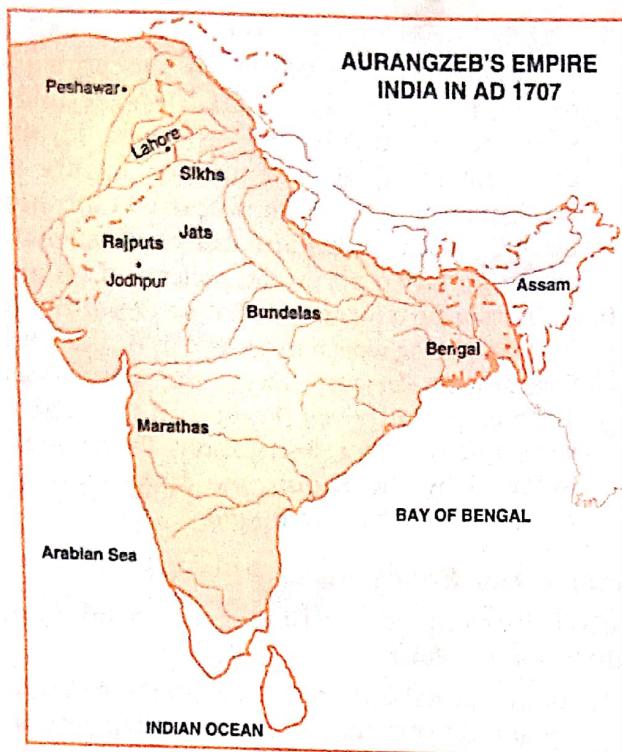
Akbar introduced a number of social and educational reforms:

1. Akbar issued orders to the kotwals to check the forcible practice of Sati or the burning of a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband. However, the women who committed Sati of their own free will were allowed to do so.
2. Akbar legalised widow remarriage.
3. Akbar was against anyone having more than one wife unless the first wife could not bear children.
4. Akbar raised the age of marriage to 14 for girls and 16 for boys.
5. Akbar revised the educational syllabus, laying more emphasis on moral education and mathematics and on secular subjects such as agriculture, geometry, astronomy, logic and history.

The other Mughal emperors also were patrons of education and there was considerable development in this area. In fact one of the duties of the public works department, *Shuhra-i-am* was to build schools and colleges.

Jahangir passed a law, whereby if a rich man was to die without an heir, his assets would be used by the State to help in the development and maintenance of educational institutions. Shah Jahan, although more interested in building monuments, took some significant educational initiatives like providing scholarships to assist students.

Female education also existed in some form during the Mughal period. Girls from



rich families usually had access to education, through private tuitions at home. The middle class girls were usually able to attend the same schools as boys.

### AURANGZEB

Aurangzeb ascended the throne after a long and fierce struggle with his father and three brothers. His long reign of 50 years was devoted to wars in different parts of the country. At its height, his rule extended over almost the entire subcontinent—from Kashmir in the north to river Kaveri in the south and from Kabul in the west to Chittagong in the east. He reversed Akbar's policy of religious tolerance. He spent the last days of his reign attempting to suppress rebellions.

Under Aurangzeb, the Mughal empire reached its largest extent, but also witnessed a



Aurangzeb

series of political disturbances. Aurangzeb died in 1707. He left behind an empire, which was on the verge of collapse.

### ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM OF THE MUGHALS

The Mughal Emperors established a centralised State based on military power. It rested on two pillars—the absolute authority of the Emperor and the strength of the army. However, the Mughal rulers made a conscious attempt to accommodate the different traditions prevalent in the country.

**Monarch:** There are a number of references in the court chronicles of the Mughals which show the belief that the power of the Mughal kings came directly from God.

According to Abul Fazl, the office of a true ruler was a very responsible one which depended on divine illumination. Thus, the Mughal Emperor, endowed with the divine light, was regarded as the vice-regent of God on earth. He ruled the empire with paternal love towards his subjects without distinction of sect or creed.

The Emperor was the head of the executive, legislature, judiciary and the army. He was the supreme commander of the armed forces and all other commanders were appointed and dismissed by him. He made laws and issued administrative ordinances. The royal *uzuk* (small singet ring) was affixed to farmans granting appointments, titles, jagirs, etc.

**Ministers:** In the days of Babur and Humayun, there used to be a Prime Minister, known as *vakil*, who was entrusted with large powers in civil and military affairs. During the early years of Akbar's reign Bairam Khan was the *vakil*. However, after Bairam Khan's death, the office of *vakil* was stripped off all its powers and it became more or less honorary.

The head of the revenue department was the *wazir*, known as *diwan* or *diwan-i-ala*. The *diwan* was responsible for all income and expenditure.

The head of the military department was called the *mir bakhshi*. The *mir bakhshi* was also the head of the intelligence and information agencies of the empire.

**Judiciary:** The judicial department was headed by the *qazi*. This post was sometimes combined

with that of the chief sadar who was responsible for all charitable and religious matters.

**Provincial Government:** Akbar paid great attention to the organisation of the Provincial government. The empire was divided into twelve provinces or subahs, which was further subdivided into sarkars and each sarkar into parganas or mahals.

Each Subah was headed by one governor who was called the subahdar or sipah salar or nazim. He was usually a mansabdar of high rank. His functions included maintenance of law and order, enforcement of imperial decrees, administration of criminal justice and the smooth collection of revenue. The provincial diwan was in charge of revenue administration of the province. His responsibilities were similar to those of the central diwan. Besides the subahdar and the diwan, the other important officials in the province were faujdar, kotwal, bakhshi, sadr gazi and muhtasib.

The Centre appointed the officials of the provinces, sarkars and parganas. Hence, these divisions were directly responsible to the centre.

**Mansabdari System:** The mansabdari system introduced by Akbar was a unique feature of the administrative system of the Mughal empire. Under this system, every officer was assigned a rank (mansab). Thus, the term mansabdar refers to an individual who holds a mansab, meaning a position or rank. The mansabdars formed the ruling group in the Mughal empire. Almost the whole nobility, the bureaucracy as well as the military hierarchy, had mansabs. The lowest rank in the system was 10, and the highest was 5000 for nobles. It was a grading system used by the Mughals to fix rank, salary and military responsibilities. These ranks were divided into two, namely zat and sawar. Zat fixed the personal status of a person and the salary due to him. The higher the zat, the more prestigious was the noble's position in court and the larger his salary. The sawar rank indicated the number of cavalrymen or sawar a mansabdar was required to maintain. For every ten cavalrymen, the mansabdar had to maintain twenty horses.

The mansabdars received their salaries as revenue assignments called jagirs. However, most of the mansabdars did not actually reside in

or administer their jagirs. They only had rights to the revenue of their assignments which was collected from them by their servants while the mansabdars themselves served in some other part of the country.

Jahangir maintained the mansabdari system developed by Akbar. But he reduced the average rate of zat salary from Rs. 240 per annum to Rs. 200 per annum. Shah Jahan reduced the number of sawars a noble was required to maintain. Thus, a noble was expected to maintain a quota of only one-third of his sawar rank and in some cases, one-fourth. During the reign of Aurangzeb, there was a huge increase in the number of mansabdars. These and other factors created a shortage in the number of jagirs.

**Land Revenue System:** A uniform system of measurement was established for calculating the land tax. Todar Mal drew up schemes for effective tax collection. This system enriched state treasury. The state also gave loans to poor farmers. This ushered in progress in agriculture, trade and industry.

#### TIMELINE

- 1530 Accession of Humayun.
- 1540 End of the Mughal empire; Battle of Kannauj; Establishment of the Suri empire by Sher Shah Suri.
- 1545 Death of Sher Shah Suri.
- 1555 End of the Suri empire; Re-establishment of the Mughal empire.
- 1556 Death of Humayun; Accession of Akbar; Second Battle of Panipat.
- 1605 Death of Akbar; Accession of Jahangir.
- 1627 Death of Jahangir; Birth of Shivaji.
- 1628 Accession of Shah Jahan.
- 1658 Accession of Aurangzeb.
- 1675 Execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur by Aurangzeb.
- 1707 Death of Aurangzeb; Accession of Bahadur Shah I.
- 1837 Accession of Bahadur Shah Zafar.
- 1858 End of the Mughal dynasty; Bahadur Shah Zafar exiled to Myanmar.

## EXERCISES

### I. Multiple-Choice Questions

A. Choose the correct answers to the questions from the given options.

1. The Ain-i-Akbari written by Abul Fazl is divided into \_\_\_\_\_ books:  
(a) Three      (b) Five      (c) Two      (d) Seven
2. Ustad Isha Khan designed one of the Seven Wonders of the World in 2007. Name it.  
(a) Jama Masjid      (b) Qutub Minar      (c) Red Fort      (d) Taj Mahal
3. Which is the biggest mosque in India?  
(a) Jama Masjid      (b) Mecca Masjid      (c) Haji Ali Dargah      (d) Kabuli Bagh Masjid
4. The Red fort complex does not house  
(a) Diwan-i-Aam      (b) Buland Darwaza      (c) Diwan-i-Khas      (d) Moti Masjid
5. Which of the following is incorrect?  
(a) First Battle of Panipat : Babur      (b) Battle of Khanwa : Rana Sanga  
(c) Battle of Haldighati : Humayun      (d) Second Battle of Panipat : Bairam Khan
6. In 1575, Akbar built a hall called Ibadat Khana at:  
(a) Fatehpur Sikri      (b) Delhi      (c) Shahjahanabad      (d) Agra
7. Name the new faith promulgated by Akbar  
(a) Mahzar      (b) Sulh-kul      (c) Din-i-Illahi      (d) Ibadat
8. Complete the analogy:  
Shuhra-i-am : public works department :: Subah : \_\_\_\_\_  
(a) subahdar      (b) provinces      (c) sarkars      (d) parganas
9. According to the Mansabdari System, the ranks were divided into \_\_\_\_\_  
(a) zat and sawar      (b) mansabdars  
(c) jagirdars      (d) cavalrymen and horses
10. Todar Mal : land revenue :: \_\_\_\_\_ : Prime Minister  
(a) Abul Fazl      (b) Bairam Khan      (c) Bhara Mal      (d) Rana Sanga

B. Read the two statements given below and select the option that shows the correct relationship between (A) and (B).

1. (A) Before Babur invaded India in 1526, India was ruled by breakaway kingdoms of the Delhi Sultanate with no powerful central authority.  
(B) These regional kingdoms one by one came under the control of the Mughals.  
(a) (B) contradicts (A)      (b) (A) is the reason for (B)  
(c) (A) is true but (B) is false      (d) (A) and (B) are independent of each other.
2. (A) The Taj Mahal is built at Agra on the banks of river Yamuna.  
(B) The method of decoration used in Taj Mahal is called Pietra dura.  
(a) (B) contradicts (A)      (b) (B) is the reason for (A)  
(c) (A) is true but (B) is false      (d) (A) and (B) are independent of each other.
3. (A) Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodhi at the First Battle of Panipat in 1526 and occupied Delhi and Agra.

## **II. Short Answer Questions**

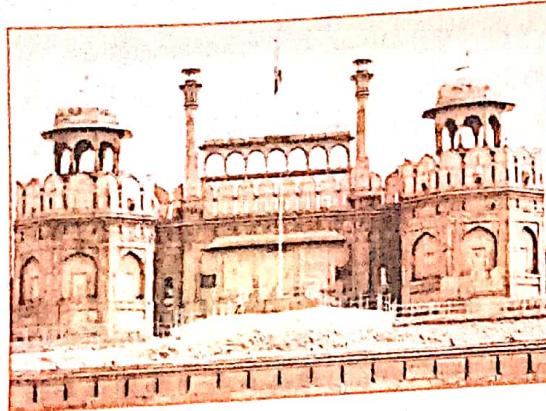
1. Name two important sources which provide information about the Mughals.
  2. Name the author of *Ain-i-Akbari*. Name any two books which constitute the *Ain-i-Akbari*.
  3. Who invited Babur to India? Why?
  4. Between whom was the First Battle of Panipat fought? What was the outcome of the battle?
  5. Between whom was the Battle of Haldighati fought? Who was defeated by Akbar at this Battle?
  6. Mention any two steps taken by Akbar to promote better understanding between the Hindus and the Muslims.
  7. Name the two taxes abolished by Akbar.
  8. What principles did Akbar's *Din-i-Ilahi* promote?
  9. Why did Akbar build the Ibadat Khana?
  10. Name the title given to the heads of the revenue department and the military department respectively in the Mughal Empire.
  11. Who were mansabdars? How were they paid?
  12. List any two social reforms that were introduced by Akbar.

### **III. Structured Questions**

1. With reference to the Mughal Empire, explain briefly the significance of the following:
    - (a) Ain-i-Akbari.
    - (b) Taj Mahal
    - (c) Red Fort
  2. With reference to the Mughal rule, state briefly:
    - (a) Akbar's policy towards the Rajputs.
    - (b) Akbar's policy of religious tolerance.
    - (c) Social reforms introduced by Akbar.
  3. With reference to the administrative system in the Mughal Period, answer the following questions:
    - (a) What was the position of the monarch?
    - (b) Who were the three important ministers?
    - (c) How was the provincial government organised?
  4. With reference to the Mansabdari system, answer the following questions:
    - (a) What was the Mansabdari system?
    - (b) What was meant by zat and sawar rank?
    - (c) Trace the changes in the system from the rule of Jahangir to Auranzeb.

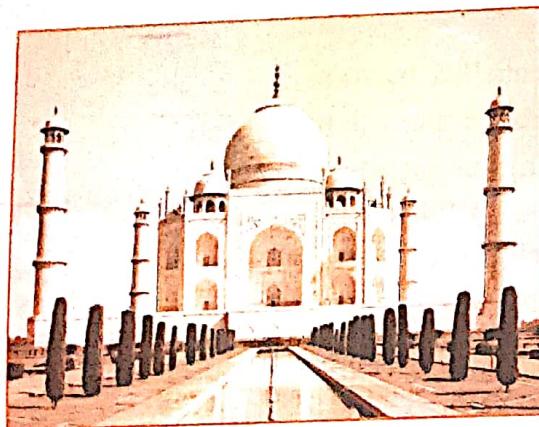
**5.** Study the picture given below and answer the following questions:

- Who built this fort? Where is it located? State its ceremonial importance in the present.
- Mention three important buildings within the fort.
- Mention two architectural features of the fort.



**6.** Study the picture given below and answer the following questions:

- Who built this monument? Where is it located? Of which material is this monument built?
- Name the person who designed this monument. Why was the monument erected? What is the method of decoration of this monument called?
- State the four features of this monument which reflect the Mughal style of architecture.



#### **IV. Thinking Skills**

- Imagine that you visited Agra during the reign of Akbar. You visited so many places in Agra and also met local people belonging to both the Hindu and the Muslim communities. State how both the communities lived amicably and strengthened the composite culture of India.
- Suppose you were a mansabdar during Akbar's reign. Give details of your powers and the salary received by you.