

The Mughal Art and Architecture

July 12, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



Art and Architecture during Mughals

The Mughal era in India (1526-1857) witnessed remarkable developments in art, architecture, literature, and painting. Mughal art and architecture showcased a unique blend of Persian, Indian, and Central Asian influences.

- **Architecture:** Grand monuments like the Taj Mahal and Red Fort were constructed, exemplifying the exquisite use of marble, intricate carvings, and impressive domes.
- **Literature:** Mughal literature flourished with the patronage of emperors like **Akbar and Shah Jahan**, producing masterpieces such as the Akbarnama and the poetry of Mirza Ghalib.
- **Painting:** Miniature painting reached its zenith during this period, characterised by delicate brushwork, vibrant colours, and vivid storytelling.
- **Cultural impact:** These artistic achievements left an indelible mark on India's cultural landscape and continue to captivate people to this day.

Architecture of the Mughals

Architectural progress during the Mughals is a landmark in world art. Mughal buildings were noted for the massive structures decorated with bulbous domes, splendid minarets, cupolas in the four corners, elaborate designs, and pietra dura.

- **Babur and Humayun:** The **mosques** built during the time of Babur and Humayun are not of much architectural significance.
- **Sur dynasty:** The Sur dynasty left behind a few spectacular specimens: the **Purana Qila** at **Delhi** and the tombs of **Sher Shah** and **Islam Shah** at **Sasaram** in Bihar.
 - The Purana Qila, with a raised citadel and the tombs on a terraced platform surrounded by large tanks, were novel features.
- **Akbar's contribution:**
 - During Akbar's reign, **Humayun's tomb** was enclosed with gardens and placed on a raised platform.
 - Built by Indian artisans and designed by Persian architects, it set a pattern to follow.
 - **The Agra Fort**, built with red sandstone, is a specimen where **Rajput architectural styles** were incorporated.
 - The new capital city of Akbar **Fatehpur Sikri** enclosed within its walls several inspiring buildings.
 - The magnificent gateway to Fatehpur Sikri, the **Buland Darwaza**, built by Akbar with red sandstone and marble, is considered a perfect architectural achievement.
- **Jahangir's Contribution:**
 - The mausoleum of Akbar at **Sikandra** near Agra, started by Akbar and completed by Jahangir, includes some **Buddhist architectural elements**.
 - The tomb of **Itimad-Ud-Daulah** (father of Nurjahan), built by Mughal queen Nur Jahan during Jahangir's reign, was the first Mughal building built entirely with white marble.
- **Shah Jahan's Contribution:** Mughal architecture reached its apex during the reign of Shah Jahan.
 - **The Taj Mahal** is a marble structure on an elevated platform, the bulbous dome in the centre rising on a recessed gateway with four cupolas around the dome and with four free-standing minarets at each of its corners is a monument of universal fame.
 - **The Red Fort in Delhi**, encompassed by magnificent buildings like **Diwan-i Aam**, **Diwan-i-Khas**, **Moti Mahal** and **Hira Mahal**, reflect the architectural skills of the times of Shah Jahan.
 - **The Moti Masjid** inside the Agra Fort is made exclusively of marble; the **Jama Masjid in Delhi**, with its lofty gateway, series of domes and tall and slender minarets, are the two significant mosques built by Shah Jahan.
 - He also established a new township, **Shahjahanabad**, where **Red Fort** and **Jama Masjid** are located.
 - **Aurangzeb's contribution:** Aurangzeb's reign witnessed the construction of **Badshahi mosque** in Lahore and the marble tomb of **Rabia ud Daurani**, known as **Bibi-ka-maqbara** (Tomb of the Lady) at Aurangabad.
- **Shalimar Gardens:** The Shalimar Gardens of Jahangir and Shah Jahan are showpieces of Indian horticulture.
- **Civil works:** Apart from the massive structures, the Mughals contributed many civil works of public utility, the greatest being the bridge over the **Gomati River** at **Jaunpur**.
 - The most impressive feat is the **West Yamuna Canal** which provided water to Delhi.

- **Influence on regional architecture:** Mughal architecture influenced even temple construction in different parts of the country.
 - The temple of **Govind Dev at Vrindavan** near Mathura and **Bir Singh's temple** of Chaturbhuji at Orchha (Madhya Pradesh) display Mughal influence.

Mughal Painting

The Mughals achieved international recognition in painting.

- **Tradition:** Ancient Indian painting traditions kept alive in provinces like **Malwa and Gujarat**, along with the **Central Asian** influences, created a profound impact on the world of painting.
 - The masters of miniature painting, **Abdu's Samad** and **Mir Sayyid Ali**, who had come to India from Central Asia along with Humayun, inspired Indian painters.
- **Objective:** The primary objective of painting was to illustrate literary works.
- **Miniature painting:** Mughal miniatures are an important part of the museums of the world.
- **Other aspects of painting:**
 - Various painters illustrated the Persian text of **Mahabharata** and **Akbar Namah** with paintings.
 - **Daswant and Basawan** were famous painters of Akbar's court.
 - **European painting** was introduced in Akbar's court by Portuguese priests.
 - During Jahangir's time, portrait painting and the painting of animals had developed. Mansur was a great name in this field.
 - Mughal miniatures influenced the great Dutch painter **Rembrandt**.
- **Decline:** While **Shah Jahan** continued the tradition of painting, **Aurangzeb's indifference** to painting led to the dispersal of the painters to different parts of the country, thereby promoting painting in the provinces.

Music and Dance during the Mughal Dynasty

- **Musicians:** According to **Ain-i-Akbari**, **Tansen of Gwalior**, credited with composing many ragas, was patronised by Akbar and 35 other musicians.
- **Royal Patronage:** **Jahangir and Shah Jahan** were patrons of music.
 - Though there is a popular misconception that **Aurangzeb** was against music, many books on Indian classical music were written during his regime.
 - His queens, princes and nobles continued to patronise music.
- **Later Mughals:** The later Mughal **Muhammad Shah** was instrumental in inspiring important developments in the field of music.
 - Paintings in **Babur Namah** and **Padshah Namah** depict women dancing to accompany musical instruments.

Literature during the Mughals

Persian, Sanskrit and **regional languages** developed during the Mughal rule.

- **Persian literature:** Persian was the language of administration in the Mughal Empire and the Deccan states. It influenced even the **Rajput states**, where Persian words were used in administration.

- **Abul Fazal:** He was patronised by Akbar, compiled the history of Akbar in **Akbar Nama** and described the Mughal administration in his work **Ain-i-Akbari**.
 - The Ain-i-Akbari is commendable for its interest in science, statistics, geography and culture.
 - Abdul Hamid Lahori and Muhammad Waris emulated Akbar Namah in their joint work **Padshah Nama**, a biography of Shah Jahan.
 - Later, **Muhammad Kazim followed the same pattern** in his **Alamgir Nama** work during the reign of the first decade of **Aurangzeb**.
- **Babur's autobiography** was written in **Chaghatai Turkish** and was translated into Persian by **Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khanan**.
- **Dabistan:** It is an impartial account of the beliefs and works of different religions.
- **Translations:** Persian literature was enriched by translations of Sanskrit works.
 - The **Mahabharata** was translated under the supervision of **Abul Faizi**, brother of Abul Fazal and a court poet of Akbar.
 - The translation of **Upanishads** by **Dara Shukoh**, entitled **Sirr-I-Akbar** (the Great Secret), is a landmark.
 - The Masnawis of **Abul Faizi, Utbi and Naziri** enriched Persian Poetry in India.
- **Sanskrit literature:** The Sanskrit works produced during the Mughal rule are impressive. Sanskrit literature of this period is noted for the kavyas and historical poetry.
 - **Rajavalipataka**, a kavya written by **Prajna Bhatta**, which completed the history of Kashmir, belonged to the reign of Akbar.
 - **Graeco-Arabic** learning was transmitted to India through Persian works in the form of Sanskrit translations.
 - Akbar's astronomer **Nilakantha** wrote the **Tajika Neelakanthi**, an astrological treatise.
 - Shah Jahan's court poet **Jaganatha Panditha** wrote the monumental **Rasagangadhara**.
- **Urdu literature:** The most significant contribution in the field of literature during the Mughal rule was the **development of Urdu** as a common language of communication for people speaking different dialects.
- **Literature in regional languages:** Regional languages acquired stability and maturity, and some of the finest lyrical poetry was produced during this period.
 - **Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khanan** composed **Bhakti poetry** blending Persian ideas of life and human relations in the Brij form of Hindi.
 - **Tulsidas**, who wrote in **Awadhi**, the Hindi dialect spoken in eastern Uttar Pradesh, was very popular for his devotional ideals.
 - Marathi literature had an upsurge due to the literary contribution of **Eknath, Tukaram, Ramdas and Mukteshwar** during this period.
 - Eknath questioned the superiority of Sanskrit over other languages.
 - The verses of Tukaram kindled monotheism.
 - Mukteshwar composed Ramayana and Mahabharata in literary Marathi.

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