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The Expression of Power in Mughal Architecture

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India: Arts & Culture

SIT Independent Study Project

**THE EXPRESSION OF POWER IN
MUGHAL ARCHITECTURE**

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India Arts and Culture Program, New Delhi

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Abstract

Delhi possesses much of India's finest architecture; it is the heart of Hindustan and holds an immense amount of power as the heart of Hindustan and a vital city during the Mughal Empire. The Mughal period in India was one of the most prolific and dynamic phases of architecture in India, characterized by a remarkable refinement of spatial symmetry and a classic attention to detailing. Contextual knowledge of the city of Delhi and who the Mughals were as rulers and patrons of the arts offers insight into the specific function of architecture in India between 1526 and 1858 AD. Architecture plays a crucial role in the success of the Mughal dynasty in Delhi as it provided the empire a means through which to assert power over the people and transcend time as rulers. The physical manifestation of power is monumentality, which is generated directly from the strength and character of the architectural form. Mughal architecture exhibits strength not only in its physical forms, but also in its range of uses from entirely public to extremely private. Case studies of Humayun's Tomb, the Jama Masjid in Delhi, and the Delhi Red Fort offer insight into the specific function of architecture during the Mughal Empire. The expression of power in these specific case studies is understood through their size and visibility, building materials, and organization of space.

Introduction

The magnificent and powerful Mughal Empire, which ruled India from the early sixteenth century through the middle of the nineteenth, is responsible for producing many of the world's most magnificent Islamic structures. Delhi, a city instilled with power and central to the Mughal Empire, was a place where significant architectural construction was done and features monumental structures embedded with power. Contextual knowledge about the histories and personalities of the first six Mughal emperors, Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, provide insight into the development of the Mughal architectural style and the physical expression of power through building. The buildings of the Mughal style form a robust and homogeneous group, and offer an understanding of the function of architecture as a means through which power can be projected. Understanding the physical manifestation of power and how it is translated into physical architectural forms can be understood through Foucault and his writings on power. Assessments about the use of size and visibility, building materials, and the organization of space are made through case studies of Humayun's Tomb, the Jama Masjid in Delhi and Delhi's Red Fort. The function of architecture goes far beyond the use of a structure, and this historical architectural analysis of Mughal architecture offers a unique perspective through which to understand India's colorful history.

Section 1

Delhi

"If the world is the body, Delhi is it's soul" – Miraz Ghalib

Located on the banks of the River Yamuna, habitation has most likely been present in and around Delhi since the second millennium BC, and continuous inhabitation has been evidenced since at least the 6th century BC¹. The earliest reference to the settlement of Delhi is found in the famous Hindu epic the *Mahabharata* when it was known as *Indraprastha*, the legendary capital of the *Pandavas*. The current habitation has seen the emergence of at least 10 cities through the thousand years it has been in existence. For centuries, Delhi has been an archetype of its powerful and famous ruling dynasties. Delhi stands as a city of power and distinction, endowed with a rich history and stunning architectural monuments marking the illustrious Mughal dynasty.²

Pehowa inscriptions of the Pratihara King, Mahendrapala I indicate that Tomars ruled over Hariyana country with *Dilli* as their capital.³ Twenty Tomar kings ruled over Delhi from 676 to 1094 AD; the Tomar dynasty lasted a total of 419 years and was started by King Anangpal Tomar and ended with King Prithviraj.⁴ Following the Tomars, the Chauhan Rajputs conquered the fort in Delhi, the *Lal Kot*, in 1180 AD and ruled Hindustan for the next century. The

¹ James Tracy, *City Walls: The Urban Enceinte in Global Perspective* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 249.

² N.L. Batra, *Dilli's Red Fort by the Yamuna*. (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2007) 15.

³ Archeological Survey of India, *Ephigraphia Indica*. (Calcutta, 1892, Vol. I) 244.

⁴ Sharma, Praduman. *Mughal Architecture of Delhi, A Study of Mosques and Tombs*. (New Delhi: Sundeep Singhal, 2000) 4.

Chauhan dynasty had a total of seven kings and fell in 1192 AD when the Afghan Muhammad Ghori defeated the Chauhan king Prithviraj III.⁵ In 1206 AD, Qutub-ud-din Aybak, the first ruler of the Slave Dynasty assumed the charge of Delhi and established the Delhi Sultanate. This marked the beginning of Islamic rule in India that would last until the British assumed control of the country in 1858. The Slave Dynasty lasted over a century and was followed by a succession of Turkic and Afghan dynasties. In total the Sultanate period consisted of five dynasties with 33 sultans who ruled Hindustan during the period from 1205 to 1526 AD.⁶ With the rise of the Delhi Sultanate, Delhi emerged as a major political, cultural and commercial city along the trade routes between northwest India and the Indo-Gangetic plains.⁷

In 1526 AD, Zahiruddin Babur defeated the last Lodi sultan in the First Battle of Panipat and founded the Mughal Empire that would rule the country until 1858. During the Mughal dynasty, 15 emperors ruled in Hindustan for more than three centuries with a brief hiatus from 1540 to 1555 when Sher Shah Sur, the great Afghan leader, routed the emperor Humayun and brought the country under the control of the Sur Dynasty.⁸ Sher Shah also had an important role in instilling power into the city of Delhi by connecting Delhi on the Grand Trunk Road thus making it an important city linking eastern and western India.⁹

⁵ Tracy 2000, 251.

⁶ See Appendix A.

⁷ Sharma 2000, 4.

⁸ Sharma 2000, 5.

⁹ Tapan Chakravarti, interview held during Academic Advisor Meeting 1, New Delhi, India, November 25, 2009.

After 1680 AD, the Mughal Empire's influence declined rapidly as the Hindu Marathas rose to prominence and Delhi faced continuous exploitation and violence from Nadir Shah and his forces especially during the later part of the 18th century. In 1803, the forces of the British East India Company overran the Maratha forces near Delhi and successfully extinguished all Mughal control over the city. The last Mughal ruler, Bahadurshah Zafar, who acted as the leader of the Indian freedom fighters, was arrested by the British Captain Hudson in 1857 AD from Humayun's tomb. He was tried for treason and was deported to Ragoon where he died.¹⁰ After the Indian Rebellion of 1857, Delhi came under direct rule of the British crown and in 1911 the capital of British India was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi. Delhi has seen many dynasties come and go, and has felt the focus of military operations for centuries. Foreign conquerors that came to Hindustan felt the power intrinsically held by the city, and made the capture and control of Delhi their primary objective because of its geographical and political importance. It is essential to understand the vicissitudes that this great and ancient city has undergone in the past in an attempt to elucidate the power that has been instilled in Delhi as a capital city.¹¹

Delhi is a city that has seen both glory and destruction in its long and multifarious history. It has been plundered, defaced and ruined time and time again only to spring from its very ashes to become the capital of powerful dynasties.¹² There is not one single factor that explains why Delhi was chosen as a capital city for rulers. Geography plays an important role in the understanding of

¹⁰ Sharma 2000, 6.

¹¹ Sharma 2000, 175.

¹² Goel 2001, 15.

Delhi as a capital city, but mere geography would point to other cities that would be prime locations from which to rule Hindustan. Delhi is well-protected city from which to rule the northern Hindustan, but was geographically very far from the south, so with the expansion of empires, like that of the Mughals, it was no longer the most logically located capital city. It did, however, offer the Mughal rulers climatic advantages since Delhi has much milder weather than they were used to in Persia. The Mughal rulers shifted their city often, and during their empire ruled from Agra, Delhi and Lahore.

Delhi lost some of its imperial status when both Akbar and his son and successor Jahangir held their courts elsewhere. From the date of Humayun's death in 1556 until Shah Jahan when built the Red Fort and took residence there in 1638, Delhi ceased to function as the capital of the empire.¹³ Choosing to have the imperial headquarters in a city other than Delhi did not signal its abandonment by either the emperor or the highly influential court members. In fact, Akbar visited Delhi several times during this reign and gave orders for the restoration and construction of several important structures indicating Delhi's continuing role as an intellectual center.¹⁴

When Shah Jahan decided to transfer his capital from Agra, he desired a location between the two cities of *Musta Khair-ul-Khilafa* or the seat of the Caliphate, Agra, and *Dar-ul-Sultana* or house of the Sultanate, Lahore, with the following prerequisites: "it should have a moderate climate and should be close to

¹³ Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period*. (Mumbai: Taraporevala Sons & Co, 1997) 90.

¹⁴ Catherine Asher, *The New Cambridge History of India: Architecture of Mughal India*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 47.

a river bank, so that water could be made to run through the buildings.”¹⁵ While the capital city of the Mughal Empire was not always located in Delhi, the city remained a focal point of their empire. According to Chenoy, “Essentially, the shift of capital from one area of a specific region to another should be understood more as a shift of the personal residence of the ruler and his household.”¹⁶ For the general populace, the shift of capital did not involve such a physical change of living space unless they were part of the service sector. The capital depended on the Mughal emperor’s personal geographical preference, with Delhi acting as a powerful city throughout the duration of the dynasty even during times when the capital city was located elsewhere. Delhi has always been an attractive option for the capital city of an empire, and even when it was not chosen as the political center, emperors and nobles maintained vital connections within the city. It has been said that “He who holds Delhi holds India;” a statement which history proven to be true and was especially true during the Mughal Empire.

¹⁵ Shama Mitra Chenoy, *Shahjahanabad: A City of Delhi*. (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, Pvt. Ltd., 1998) 31. Quote from Waris, *Padshah Nama* (Br. Mu.Folio 386, 508, Recto), typescript, 35-36, 377.

¹⁶ Chenoy 1998, 19.

Section 2

The Mughals

The establishment of the Mughal dynasty by Babur was the start of one of the most prolific and dynamic phases of art and architecture in India. Mughal architecture includes a combination of Indo, Islamic and Persian styles and includes elements of Persian aesthetics that had been introduced to India during the Delhi Sultanate. The Mughals built magnificent forts, palaces, gates, public buildings, mosques, water tanks and more and developed a distinctly beautiful architectural style that reflects their personality. Understanding the history of this great empire provides insight into the way that architecture was used by the Mughals as a way to assert their political and religious authority.

Babur

Babur, the first emperor of the Mughal dynasty, had attempted to capture Delhi more than once before but had lacked the resources to mount a sufficiently large expedition. With the steady decline in popularity of Delhi's Sultan Ibrahim, Babur seized his opportunity by uniting his followers in a small but well organized army, which, if successful, would acquire enormous wealth.¹⁷ Babur's victory at Panipat in 1526 established the Mughal Empire and ended the reign of the Delhi Sultanate.

Babur, the new ruler of Delhi, had been the ruler of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan for 20 years. Babur was a Turk with a thick stream of Mongol blood;

¹⁷ Khalid Mubireek, *The Legacy of Islamic Empires and their Arts*. (Seattle.: University of Washington Press, 1998) 2.

therefore, the term *Mughal* by which he and his descendents are known in India was really a misnomer. The word Mughal, always highly derogatory among the civilized inhabitants of Iran, simply means Mongol in Persian.¹⁸ Babur's qualifications as an oriental conqueror could hardly be improved upon: his father's descendance from Timur was matched by his mother's from Genghis Kahn. It is clear from Babur's writing that he considered himself a Turk, and his Mongol lineage meant less to him than his paternal ancestry that linked him with Timur the great Turkish conqueror.¹⁹ Turks were patrons of the arts and education; they were fine warriors capable of handling a sword as dexterously as a brush or pen. The Turks were collectors of books and paintings; they loved palaces, gilded tents, and fine clothing and eagerly sought out every new luxury.²⁰ Turks boasted pretentious pedigrees from other conquering tribes and clans of inner Asia, yet they were versed in Persian traditions of culture and refinement.

Babur was well organized had a keen eye for natural beauty of every kind. He was a brave, humble and good-humored man and his attractive personality combined a fine sense of taste and style with the obvious virtues of soldier and ruler. Although Babur's life was occupied with warfare and physical exertion, he enjoyed the company of many artists and writers and Babur, himself, has many literary contributions to his credit. He left to his successors a legacy of artistic sensitivity, a passion for beauty, artistic objectives, and an articulate patronage of Persian.

¹⁸ Bamber Gascoigne, *The Great Moghuls: India's Most Flamboyant Rulers*. (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd, 2002) 1.

¹⁹ Gascoigne 2002, 4.

²⁰ Mubirek 1998, 3.

Babur's memoirs suggest that the construction of permanent buildings assumed less importance to him than the construction of gardens.²¹ There are only a few structures that survive from Babur's time, which were built in the final years of his reign. Only ruling Hindustan for five short years, Babur introduced the Timurid architectural concepts, and most importantly, the *char bagh*, or rationally organized four-part paradise garden. This concept of the pleasure garden became a trademark and an important element for later Mughal architecture.²²

Humayun

Babur's eldest son and successor, Humayun, took over the throne in 1530 but lacked his father's military experience and the tough character necessary to consolidate the new dynasty. This weakness cost Humayun his kingdom, when, 1540, he lost control of Delhi to the Afghan rebel noble, Sher Shah Suri of Bihar.²³ Humayun spent the next 15 years in exile in Iran, while steady erosion of Mughal authority occurred in northern India. Humayun regained his kingdom in 1555 but six months later he died from injuries received after a fall.

Humayun's most noted artistic achievement was in the sphere of painting. While in exile in Persia, he recruited painters of merit to accompany him back to India. These artists laid the foundation of the Mughal style that emerged from its Persian standard as an indigenous achievement in which Indian elements blended harmoniously with the traditions of Iran and Central Asia.²⁴ Given Humayun's

²¹ Asher 1992, 24.

²² Bindia Thapar, *Introduction to Indian Architecture*. (Singapore: Periplus Editions, 2004) 84.

²³ Thapar 2004, 86.

²⁴ Gavin, Hambly, *Cities of Mughal India*. (New York: Putnam, 1968) 144.

rocky history and struggle to retain his crown, no significant examples of monumental architecture are attributed to Humayun. The most celebrate building associated with Humayun is his tomb in Delhi.²⁵ This mausoleum was a devotion of Hamida Begum, Humayun's widow who supervised the building's construction during the reign of their son Akbar. Laid out during Humayun's reign, this structure was completed in the architectural style consistent with works typical of Akbar's period.²⁶ Humayun's tomb marked the beginning of a major development in the history of the Indo-Islamic architectural style and is said to mark the true architectural beginning of the Mughal style²⁷. Each ardently aware of their Timurid heritage, both Babur and Humayun made an effort to incorporate Timurid-inspired architectural forms and spatial conceptions into India and the ideology behind such forms was maintained by their Mughal successors.²⁸

Akbar

Akbar was only 14 years of age in 1556 when he succeeded his father Humayun and within the first year of his reign, Mughal control over northern India was finally established. Akbar is generally recognized as the greatest and most capable of the Mughal rulers and under his guidance the Mughals changed from a petty power to a major dynastic state.²⁹ Akbar pursued a policy of vigorous expansion until his empire reached the greater part of the sub-continent north of

²⁵ See Appendix C: Humayun's Tomb.

²⁶ Mubireek 1998, 4.

²⁷ Thapar 2004, 84.

²⁸ Asher 1992, 38.

²⁹ Asher 1992, 39.

the Godavari.³⁰ Akbar proved himself as sophisticated a commander and leader as any of his ancestors. Akbar was an ambitious and noble commander who built the largest army ever in the history of the Mughal Empire. From his time to the end of the Mughal period, artistic production on both an imperial and sub-imperial level was closely linked to notions of state policy, religion and kingship.³¹

Akbar, who was born at Amarkot in Sind in 1542, spent his childhood in exile in Afghanistan being trained in military strategy and combat. He was never educated and remained illiterate for the duration of his life. While he was not able to read and write, Akbar had a very vibrant mind and had a great appreciation for art and aesthetics. From his Persian mother, he inherited his princely manners, his love of the arts, and a characteristically Persian delight in philosophical discussion. From his Turkish father, he inherited his fierce energy, his love of war and his ability to command.³² During the early part of his life, Akbar took the greatest joy in hunting, in elephant fights, and in intellectual games.

Akbar also established a new religious philosophy, Din-i-Ilahi or the Divine Faith, which was a result of the emperor's consistent confrontations with his orthodox components.³³ The doctrines of this philosophy are extraordinary for their tolerance of other religions, and are reflected in the architecture of Akbar's period through his construction of a collection of secular structures. As a result of Akbar's acceptance of diverse backgrounds and religions, imperially sponsored

³⁰ Hambly 1968, 96.

³¹ Asher 1992, 39.

³² Gascoigne 2002, 92.

³³ Thapar 2004, 85.

architecture from his reign incorporates Timurid concepts with forms, motifs, and building techniques that were long indigenous to Indian and Hindu architecture.³⁴

Unlike Babur or Humayun, Akbar had both the time and the resources to build on a monumental scale. Most of the monuments were constructed in or near Agra rather than Delhi.³⁵ Delhi, the site of the most important Mughal structures prior to Akbar's reign, must have been a city of unhappy memories for Akbar so he quickly moved his capital Agra which was renamed Akbarabad in his honor and became one of the greatest cities in the empire. Akbar built primarily forts and palaces, building types that reflect his concept of the Mughal state. Akbar's architecture features primarily the use of red sandstone and invited architects and artists from all over India to participate in the construction of many monumental structures. The design and construction of Akbari structures reflect Akbar's eclectic spirits and are extremely power in scale and design, but not overly ornate and were still understood by the public on a more earthly scale.

Jahangir

During his 50-year reign, Akbar accumulated much wealth from the political and commercial centers in northern India. His immediate successors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan were able to surround themselves with a splendor and opulence unequaled by any other Muslim dynasty. From the beginning, Jahangir's life was overshadowed by the achievements of his father Akbar. Jahangir grew up

³⁴ Asher 1992, 98.

³⁵ Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991) 43.

resentful and despite his acute intelligence,³⁶ the Mughal ruler was generally indifferent to the larger interests of the empire. Jahangir was self-indulgent and sensual with a streak of cruelty and emanated from a weak personality.³⁷

Jahangir lived under the spell of personalities more colorful than his own, the most influential of which was his beautiful wife Nur Jahan whom he married in 1611. Nur Jahan became the real ruler of the empire until the death of Jahangir in 1627. Nur Jahan was Jahangir's favorite wife, she shared his interests in fine artistic objects and precious stones; she was an excellent conversationalist, a fine judge of Persian poetry and a poet herself. Her accomplishments made her an irresistible companion for the emperor.³⁸ Nur Jahan was a patron of painting and architecture whose interests also extended to the decoration of rooms as well as the designing of ornaments, brocades, rugs and dresses.

Jahangir was a more enthusiastic patron of the fine arts and was not actively involved in building during his reign. The emperor's influential wife, Nur Jahan, however, stimulated the construction of buildings later in Jahangir's reign and is responsible for the construction of several extraordinary architectural works. Most of Jahangir's architecture was residential in nature and was built outside of Delhi, since the capital of the Mughal Empire during his control was located in Agra and Lahore. While Jahangir himself was not especially interested in architecture, he fervently encouraged the nobility to engage in architectural projects.³⁹ With Jahangir, white marble, which had previously only been used for

³⁶ Gascoigne 2002, 133.

³⁷ Mubireek 1998, 6.

³⁸ Hambly 1968, 155.

³⁹ Asher 1992, 99.

tombs and shrines of saints, was introduced for palace architecture.⁴⁰ The era of marble had begun and would be perfected by Shah Jahan, who made building his passion. According to the architectural historian Catherine Asher, "if in Akbar's period architecture at the frontier was often a symbol of Mughal power, in Jahangir's reign it was an indication of genuine presence, serving permanent populations as well as encouraging trade across the empire."⁴¹

Shah Jahan

Shah Jahan assumed the Mughal throne in 1628 and his 30-year reign was dominated by an outward sense of prosperity and stability unmatched even during Akbar's rule.⁴² The golden era of Mughal authority was attained, a period which found expression in a style of architecture marked by exceptional splendor and the highest degree of perfection. As a child, Shah Jahan was the favorite of his grandfather Akbar and his own father Jahangir and was schooled by renowned scholars and religious thinkers. Shah Jahan grew up in luxury; he enjoyed the support of experienced administrators and also possessed an impressive military and administrative aptitude. Shah Jahan was a competent commander, a generous master, and a discerning leader with a strict sense of justice.⁴³ Under Shah Jahan Islamic orthodoxy increased and upon assuming the throne he adopted lofty

⁴⁰ Koch 1991, 85.

⁴¹ Asher 1992, 168.

⁴² Mubireek 1998, 4.

⁴³ Mubireek 1998, 5.

titles, proclaiming himself King of the World, and the Meteor of the Faith, titles which he took very seriously.⁴⁴

Shah Jahan was interested in architecture from an early age and took an active part in the many impressive architectural projects of his reign.⁴⁵ Shah Jahan officially transferred the capital of the Mughal Empire from Agra to Delhi in 1648, and many stunning examples of architecture from his reign can still be seen in Delhi today. More than any other ruler, Shah Jahan sought to project the emperor's formal and semi-divine character and supported his image as the upholder of Islam by building many more mosques than any emperor before him.⁴⁶ Shah Jahan's architectural style favored classicism in form and medium and can be closely traced back to the buildings of his predecessors.

The use of white marble as a building material dominates Shah Jahan's architecture. White marble had been used sparingly by Akbar and Jahangir, and had been used occasionally for both Hindu and Muslim buildings before the Mughal period, but the profuse and consistently elegant use of this material by Shah Jahan made it virtually his own architectural trademark.⁴⁷ Architecture from Shah Jahan's reign symbolized perfectly, as no doubt was intended, the strength and opulence of the Empire promulgated by the emperor. Architecture under Shah Jahan is characterized by exceptional grandeur, embellishment, and the embodiment of power and perfection.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Asher 1992, 170.

⁴⁵ Gascoigne 2002, 77.

⁴⁶ Asher 1992, 250.

⁴⁷ Gascoigne 2002, 187.

⁴⁸ Brown 1997, 102.

Aurangzeb and the Later Mughals

In 1657, Shah Jahan's son Aurangzeb imprisoned him, defeated and killed his older brother and ascended to Delhi's throne. Aurangzeb, the last of the Great Mughals, is often said to be responsible for the decline of the Mughal Empire through his ruinous policies of intolerance.⁴⁹ A lack of vitality in artistic production paralleled this military and political instability. Aurangzeb was a well-educated man with an acute sense of political realism, a fierce appetite for power and a strict religious orthodoxy.⁵⁰ Aurangzeb appointed Rajput chieftains to many of the highest offices in the court and just as his predecessors had done, allowed Hindus to work side by side with Muslims. Afraid of Hindu and other Indian influences encroaching upon the Muslim state, Aurangzeb eventually ended this practice and sought to bring Muslim orthodoxy to the empire.⁵¹

Under the reign of Aurangzeb, the Mughal Empire reached its greatest extent but the emperor's puritanical outlook and costly wars meant that support for the arts was almost complete withdrawn. Earlier in the Mughal dynasty, the emperor was seen as the model patron, but under Aurangzeb this changed. By temperament Aurangzeb was an ascetic who avoided all forms of luxury and ostentation. Going as far as to refuse to wear silk against his body, the emperor found both music and the representational arts distasteful.⁵² While this aversion to most forms of art did not extend to architecture, he frowned upon the use of marble and other luxury materials like sandstone and marble, and especially later

⁴⁹ Thapar 2004, 96.

⁵⁰ Gascoigne 2002, 219.

⁵¹ Gascoigne 2002, 222.

⁵² Hambly 1968, 170.

in his reign, Aurangzeb favored the use of less expensive materials including stucco, rough stone and brick. This change in the preference of building materials resulted in rather heavy architecture.⁵³ In an effort to counter the loss of architectural grace, there was a concerted move toward excessive ornamentation featuring bulbous domes, fluted surfaces decorated with stripes and elaborate floral motifs.⁵⁴

While Aurangzeb was much less involved in architectural production than his predecessors, he did sponsor the construction of a few important religious monuments. With no dynamic imperial patron, architecture resulting from the reign of Aurangzeb was built independently by the nobility and other classes and often employed styles and motifs that echoed those established in Shah Jahan's reign.⁵⁵ Aurangzeb evokes an image of somber grandeur which can also be seen in the architecture of his time, and despite the emperor's personal hostility to the arts, Delhi remained an artistic and cultural center and the foremost city of the empire.

With Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the great Mughal Empire rapidly slid into decadence. The 19th century was one of the worst times in India's history, marked by a succession of useless battles, excessive debauchery within the court and a destitute empire. In 1739, Nadir Shah of Persia attacked and raided Delhi, taking many treasures including Shah Jahan's famous Peacock Throne. Delhi saw the massacre of thousands of citizens, mercilessly killed by Nadir Shah's mercenaries. The British arrested the last Mughal emperor, Bahadurshah Zafar,

⁵³ Brown 1997, 114.

⁵⁴ Thapar 2004, 96.

⁵⁵ Asher 1992, 253.