

UPSC Civil Services Examination

UPSC Notes [GS-I]

Topic: India under the Mughals [Medieval Indian History Notes for UPSC]

INDIA UNDER THE MUGHALS

Economic and Social Life

- The socio-economic conditions of India are mentioned by many European Travellers and trader who came to India and their accounts contain a mine of information.
- Generally, most of the accounts describe the wealth and prosperity of India and also the lavish life of the nobles.
- There are accounts of foreigners as well that give information about the poverty and sufferings of the ordinary people such as peasants and artisans.

Mughal Nobility

- The Mughals were nobles and most of them were foreigners like Turks and Afghans and formed a privileged class.
- The Mughal nobles were paid high salaries but their expenses were also the same.
- Each noble had a large number of servants, horses, elephants etc.
- Wealthy people dressed in silk and cotton clothes and the poor people dressed minimal.
- One of the foreigners Nikitin mentions that the people in the Deccan were bare-footed indicating the high cost of leather.
- The common people food was pulses, millets and rice.
- In coastal region fish was common.
- Milk and milk products were surplus, salt and sugar were expensive, while ghee and oil were cheaper.

Agriculture

- One of the estimates claims that at the beginning of the 17th century India's population was about 125 million.
- A large variety of crops such as barley, gram, pulses, rice, and wheat were cultivated.
- Commercial crops such as indigo, oil-seeds, cotton and sugarcane were also cultivated.
- During the seventeenth century two new crops, viz., tobacco and maize were added.
- On a note, no new agricultural technique was introduced during this period.
- India was able to export food items like rice and sugar to the neighbouring countries.

Growth of Trade

- The Indian trading classes spread across the country and were in large numbers.
- Seth and Bohra – Long distance traders
- Banik – Local traders
- Banjaras – Another class of traders specialized in carrying bulk goods, they also moved long distances with their goods on the back of oxen.
- Bulk goods were also taken through rivers on boats.
- The Gujarati merchants included the Hindus, Jains and Muslims.
- In Rajasthan, Oswals, Maheshwaris, and Agarwals came to be called the Marwaris.
- The most important trading communities in south India
 - The Chettis on the Coramandal coast
 - the Muslim merchants of Malabar
- Bengal – Exported sugar, rice as well as delicate muslin and silk.
- Gujarat – Was an entry point of foreign goods from where fine textiles and silk were taken to north India.
- The major imports into India were certain metals such as
 - tin and copper
 - war horses and
 - luxury items such as ivory
- The import of gold and silver balanced of trade.
- In the seventeenth century, the growth of foreign trade resulted in the increased import of gold and silver.

Cultural Development under the Mughals

- The Mughal period witnessed a significant and widespread development in cultural activity.
- It was evident in the sphere of art and architecture, painting, music and literature.
- The Mughals brought Turko-Iranian culture into India and the Indian traditions were blended Turko-Iranian culture.

Art and Architecture

- The Mughals were fond of laying gardens with running water. Some of the Mughal Gardens are:
 - Nishat Bagh in Kashmir
 - the Shalimar Bagh at Lahore
 - the Pinjore garden in the Punjab
- During the reign of Sher Shah, the mausoleum at Sasaram in Bihar and the Purana Qila near Delhi were built.
- Large scale construction of buildings started with the dawn of Akbar
- He built many forts and the most famous one was the Agra Fort. It was built in red sandstone.
- His other forts are at Lahore and Allahabad.
- Shah Jahan built the famous Red Fort at Delhi with its Rang Mahal, Diwan-i-Am and Diwan-i-Khaswas
- Akbar also built a palace cum fort complex at Fatehpur Sikri (City of Victory).
- Many buildings in Gujarati and Bengali styles are also found in this complex.
- Gujarati style buildings were probably built for his Rajput wives.
- The most magnificent building in it is the Jama Masjid and the gateway to it called Buland Darwaza or the Lofty Gate.
- The height of the gateway is 176 feet. It was built to commemorate Akbar's victory over Gujarat.
- Other important buildings at Fatehpur Sikri are Jodha Bai's palace and Panch Mahal with five storeys.
- During Akbar's reign, the Humayun's tomb was built at Delhi and it had a massive dome of marble.
- It may be considered the precursor of the Taj Mahal.
- Akbar's tomb at Sikandara near Agra was completed by Jahangir.
- Nur Jahan built the tomb of Itimaddaulah at Agra.
- It was constructed wholly of white marble with floral designs made of semi-precious stones on the walls. (Pietra dura)
- This method became more popular during the reign of Shah Jahan.

- Taj Mahal
 - The Pietra Dura method was used on a large scale in the Taj Mahal.
 - Taj Mahal is considered as jewel of the builder's art.
 - It contains all the architectural forms developed by the Mughals.
 - The chief glory of the Taj is the massive dome and the four slender minarets
 - The decorations are kept to the minimum.
- The Moti Masjid at Agra was built entirely in white marble. The Jama Masjid at Delhi was built in red stone.
- Many features of Mughal tradition can be seen in the Golden Temple at Amritsar.

Paintings and Music

- The foundation for the Mughal painting was laid by Humayun while staying in Persia.
- He brought with him two painters – Mir Sayyid Ali and Abdal Samad to India.
- Akbar commissioned the illustrations of several literary and religious texts.
- He invited a large number of painters from different parts of the country to his court.
- Both Hindus and Muslims joined in this work.
- Baswan, Miskina and Daswant attained great positions as Akabar's court as artists.
- Illustrations of Persian versions of Mahabharata and Ramayana were produced in miniature form.
- Art Studio established by Akbar. Historical works such as Akbar Nama also remained the main themes of Mughal paintings
- Mughal paintings reached its climax during the reign of Jahangir.
- He employed a number of painters like Abul Hasan, Bishan Das, Madhu, Anant, Manohar, Govardhan and Ustad Mansur
- Music had also developed under the Mughals.
- Akbar patronized Tansen of Gwalior.
- Tansen composed many ragas.
- Jahangir and Shah Jahan were also fond of music.

Language and Literature

- Persian language became widespread in the Mughal Empire by the time of Akbar's reign.
- Many historical works were written during this period.
- They include Ain-i-Akbari and Akabar Nama authored by Abul Fazl.

- The leading poet of that period was his brother Abul Faizi.
- The translation of Mahabharata into the Persian language was done under his supervision.
- Utbi and Naziri were the two other leading Persian poets
- Jahangir's autobiography, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri was famous for its style
- He also patronized many scholars like Ghiyas Beg, Naqib Khan and Niamatullah
- Shah Jahan also patronized many writers and historians like Abdul Hamid Lahori, author of Padshah Nama and Inayat Khan who wrote Shah Jahan Nama.
- His son Dara Shikoh translated the Bhagavat Gita and Upanishads into the Persian language
- Regional languages such as Bengali, Oriya, Rajasthani and Gujarati had also developed during this period.
- Many devotional works including the Ramayana and Mahabharata were translated into regional languages.
- The most influential Hindi poet was Tulsidas, who wrote the Hindi version of the Ramayana, the Ramcharitmanas.

