

## Notes to accompany power point presentation

### How many Mughal Emperors were there?

While there were only six major rulers who left their mark on Indian history, Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, there were a total of 21 Mughal emperors who ruled India for more than 3 centuries.

### How was the Mughal Dynasty founded?

It was founded in 1526 when Babur, a Turco-Mongol Prince from Central Asia, (great grandson of the Turco-Mongol conqueror Timur) invaded the land he knew as Hindustan.

Babur was born in 1483. He was named Zahir-ud-din (Defender of Faith) Muhammad. He inherited Farghana, a small kingdom in Central Asia, when he was 12 years old. However, he was soon driven out of there by Uzbeks. After 10 years of war, Babur established himself as the ruler of Kabul. He then set his sights eastwards.

At the Battle of Panipat in 1526 he defeated Ibrahim Lodi and seized the Delhi Sultanate, laying the foundations for a great empire.

Through his mother's line, Babur was also descended from the Mongol ruler Genghis Khan and the dynasty became known by the Persian word for Mongol 'Mughal'.

At his death in 1530, his kingdom incorporated the major cities of Kabul, Lahore, Agra and Delhi, but his control was fragile.

Babur was succeeded by his son, Humayun, who lacked his father's determination and military brilliance.

Within ten years, Humayun was forced out of Hindustan by the Afghan Sher Shah Suri, the ruler of Bihar and Bengal. Sher Shah took over the Mughal territory and ruled from Delhi.

Humayun took refuge in Iran at the court of the Persian ruler Shah Tahmasp. With the Shah's help, he was able to return to Kabul, from where he eventually launched a successful attack on Delhi.

Humayun regained his former territories in 1555, after 15 years, but died months later after falling down the stone steps of his library.

His tomb in Delhi, built several years after his death, is the first great Mughal architectural masterpiece; it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1993.

Humayun was succeeded in 1556 by his 13-year-old son, **Akbar**. He was the most famous Mughal Emperor and was often called Akbar the Great. He reigned for 49 years.

Akbar extended Mughal rule over most of the north of the subcontinent, stretching from Gujarat in the west to Bengal in the east, and from Kabul and Kashmir in the north to the borders of the independent Deccan sultanates in the south.

Akbar encouraged good relations between Hindus and Muslims. One of his wives was a Hindu Rajput princess.

In 1571 he began to build his Mughal capital at Fatehpur Sikri. It was short-lived, moving to Lahore in 1585 and Agra in 1599.

He began the construction of Agra Fort in 1565.

When Akbar died in 1605, he was succeeded by his son **Jahangir**. Jahangir's wife commissioned the Itimad-ud-Daulah Tomb in Agra for her father and mother. This was the first structure built in marble and is nick-named "Baby Taj" because of its inlay work.

Following Jahangir's death, his son **Shah Jahan** took over in 1628.

His reign was known as "The Golden Age of Mughal Architecture".

At his first capital, Agra, he undertook the building of two great mosques, the Motī Masjid (Pearl Mosque) and the Jāmi' Masjid (Great Mosque) of Agra. The Taj Mahal, also in Agra, the masterpiece of his reign was erected in memory of his wife.

He started work on the Red Fort complex in Delhi. It was being built as the palace fort of Shahjahanabad – his new capital. He also built the well-known mosque Jāmi' Masjid.

Shah Jahan never lived in the Red Fort as in 1659 he was deposed by his son **Aurangzeb** and imprisoned until his death in 1666.

Aurangzeb was the last of the strong Mughal emperors. He was a pious Muslim and established Sharia law throughout India thus alienating his Hindu subjects. Aurangzeb expanded the empire to include a huge part of South Asia. At its peak, the kingdom stretched to 3.2 million square kilometres, including parts of what are now India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. After his death, in 1707, his eldest son Azam Shah became the King (for 3 months). He was overthrown by his brother Bahadur Shah I who reigned from 1707 to 1712. Bahadur Shah kept the empire stable, by maintaining a relaxed religious policy; however, after his death the empire soon declined.

A period of political instability, military defeats, and court intrigues led to a succession of weak emperors:

Jahandar Shah ruled for one year from 1712–1713

Farrukhsiyar from 1713–1719

Rafi ud-Darajat and Shah Jahan II only for a couple of months in 1719.

By the time Muhammad Shah came to power in 1719, after defeating two other claimants to the Empire, Mughal power was in serious decline and the empire was vulnerable. The Empire lost some significant states during his reign. In the battle of Karnal in 1739, Muhammad Shah was defeated by Nader Shah of Persia, who went on to conquer Delhi and most of northern India. Nader also defeated the Mughals in Jalalabad, Lahore, and Sirhind, taking control over these regions. While Muhammad Shah was unable to reclaim his kingdoms, he did manage to rule until 1748.

Following Muhammad Shah's reign, the Mughals continued to lose territory controlled by them until 1857, when the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah II or Bahadur Shah Zafar, failed to defeat the British and was exiled by them to Rangoon in Burma where he died in 1862. The East India Company took control of the Indian subcontinent after the Mughals and began their rule.

Among the Mughal UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India are:

Humayun's Tomb, Agra Fort, Fatehpur Sikri, Red Fort, and the Taj Mahal, which is described as the "jewel of Muslim art in India and one of the universally admired masterpieces of the world's heritage."

### **Plague in Agra 1618 -1619**

Various outbreaks of illness occurred during the Mughal Empire's rule.

In 1616, during the reign of Jahangir, plague broke out in the empire and reoccurred each cold season for the next eight years. Jahangir mentioned the three outbreaks that took place in the winters of 1616, 1617 – 1618, and 1618-1619 in his memoirs, the Jahangirnama. The symptoms he described: headaches, fever, nose bleeds, sickness, swellings and pain show that these were outbreaks of bubonic plague and of septicemic plague.

The plague of 1618-1619 affected Jahangir's movement through his empire and the place from which he chose to govern.

The Mughal Empire covered a large geographical area and had established imperial capital cities.

Prior to Mughal rule villages had been constructed about three kilometers apart. During Akbar's reign, Mughal towns were constructed 25-30 kilometers apart within the framework of villages to serve as intermediate centres for trade and the movement of agricultural produce. Provincial and Imperial capitals were placed at the centre of these planned geographical systems.

Agra was the most important imperial capital at the time. However, the Mughal court was peripatetic and the seat of government moved with the Emperor. When the plague was rife in Agra in 1618 -1619, the government continued to operate at full capacity, showing the Emperor's strength and his ability to rule regardless of wherever he happened to be.

In early 1618 Jahangir and his court left the province of Malwa to return to the imperial capital city of Agra after almost 5 years away. Enroute he received word that the plague was rife in the capital. Jahangir decided to establish himself and his court in the city of Ahmadabad in Gujarat until it was safe to return to Agra. At the beginning of September Jahangir left again for Agra. In December having reached the outskirts of Fatehpur Sikri, 24 miles west of Agra, he was told that the plague was rife again. He therefore decided to stay at Fatehpur Sikri until it was safe to return to Agra.

During Jahangir's reign, Agra grew in population. In 1609 there were approximately 500,000 people and between 1629 and 1643 nearly 660,000 were estimated to live there. This density probably contributed to the rampant spread of the plague when it reached the city. Jahangir described an extremely virulent strain that passed from person to person, person to animal, animal to animal and animal to person with the slightest touch.

The plague in Agra of 1618 -1619 does not appear to have spread further west than the village of Amanabad, 5 miles east of Fatephur Sikri and 19 miles west of Agra. This geographical halt was likely because Amanabad and its immediate surroundings were completely abandoned after the last two outbreaks of the plague. During the earlier outbreak in 1616, Fatephur Sikri was spared whilst Agra was severely affected. An employer of the East Indian Company left Agra for Fatephur Sikri to escape the plague. Either Fatephur Sikri's population was sparse enough to limit transmission or the distance between Agra and Aminabad was enough to prevent the plague spreading to Fatephur Sikri.

One of the most effective methods of controlling and dealing with the plague in the Mughal Empire was to abandon houses, villages and towns and to relocate to safer areas. Removing any possible human carrier of disease was a recognised method of fighting epidemics. A Mughal imperial historian recorded in his history of Jahangir's reign that a family could avoid succumbing to disease by immediately leaving their home to go away to the jungle upon seeing signs of the illness.

Although no reason is given in sources of the time why the abandonment of urban and rural areas led to disease control reasonable assumptions can be made:

1. Abandoning living quarters resulted in limiting and ultimately halting the possibility of the spread of infection between humans.
2. Abandonment of population centres prevented the disease from entering a community from an outside source whether by human or animal.
3. Reduced human populations, or a lack of them entirely, within a defined area meant little or no food sources for creatures through which the disease could be transmitted, thereby limiting or denying the possibility of interspecies spread.