CHAPTER III
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3.1 The historical background of Agra and its importance

Narrow, serpentine streets, crowded bustling bazaars, spacious suburbs and a fine cantonment, this teeming city on the bank of the river Yamuna, 200 kilometers south of Delhi, is like any other Indian city—and yet it is not. For this is Agra. The city is of one of the wonders of man—the shimmering white jewel, the Taj Mahal.

“The earliest mention of Agra is in the epic Mahabharata (third century BC). It was then called Agrabana or Paradise of Sanskrit. In the second century AD, Ptolemy the geographer of Alexander the Great, showed it on his map of the world as Agra.” But it was only at the turn of the fourteenth century that the city appears on the map of India. Three hundred and fifty years ago, at the height of Mughal power, Agra was the imperial capital and the largest and most important city of northern India. It was here that the famous school of Mughal painting was founded and flourished. And it was here, under the great Mughal Emperor Akbar, that a unique synthesis of Indian and Persian thought and culture was achieved in the latter half of the sixteenth century. This blend of two traditions found expression in all walks of life from the architecture of Fatahpur Sikri and the lovely mughal miniatures to the eclectic religion, the Din-i-Illahi, founded by Akbar.

The splendor of that age has long since faded. And even the exquisite marble of the Taj has begun to show signs of wear. Today, Agra is an important communications junction on the road, rail and air routes. It is also an important commercial centre. The major occupations are cotton ginning and pressing, carpet weaving and leather work. Agra is also a veritable shoemaker’s city. Its durable and handcrafted shoes have found their way to all corners of the world. Indeed Agra, the city of beautiful buildings, has much
to offer besides the Taj Mahal, even if it is for the Taj that it is best remembered.

Agra is not even 500 years old; by Indian standards; this means it is a fairly new city. The story of its settlement and growth is inextricably linked to the history of Delhi. After Timur’s invasion in 1398, the prestige of the Delhi Sultanate had been shattered; everywhere, ambitious nobles asserted their independence. By the middle of the fifteenth century, the Lodies—who were Afghans, unlike the Turks who had rule Delhi earlier-gained dominance over the Punjab and the Upper Gangetic valley. But even the ablest of the Lodies, Sikandar (1489-1517), was only partially successful in controlling the rebellious nobles.

The city of Agra was thus founded in the early years of the sixteenth century. It grew into a large town and an important centre under the Lodies. Sikandar’s successor, Ibrahim, had to contend with the power of the Rana of Malwa which extended towards Agra. Ibrahim Lodi, although well-versed in military skills, was a poor administrator. He cracked down on the powerful Afghan nobles and thereby lost their sympathies. It was at this time that Babur invaded India at the request of the Afghan nobles and defeated Ibrahim Lodi in the first battle of Panipat in 1526. His son, Humayun, overcame the Rajputs and gained control of Agra.

Babur did not like India. In his memoirs he complains that India has not good horses, no good dogs, no grapes, musk-melons or good fruit, no ice or cold water, no bread or cooked food in the bazaars, no hot baths, no colleges, and no candles. Above all, Babur missed the mountainous terrain of Farghana, now a province of Chinese Turkistan, he had grown up in. To increase the charm of his surroundings, Babur laid out a beautiful garden, the Rambhag at Agra. Symmetrical pathways, running water and fountains, beds of roses narcissi: the Persian garden had come to India.
After Babur’s death at Agra in 1530, Humayun was left with a precarious hold on the kingdom. A modern commentator writes: “In Agra…the new emperor sat on a rug as large as a football field, puzzled over conundrums with mathematicians and wallowed in the fantasies of an opium eater.”

In the early years of Mughal rule, the capital city was Delhi, not Agra. In 1539 and 1540, Sher Shah, the rebel Afghan, routed Humayun in two decisive battles and became ruler of the Delhi-Agra region. It was in Sher Shah’s time that the Grand Trunk Road through Agra was first laid with shade-giving trees planted on either side. Humayun recaptured his kingdom in 1555 but died in Delhi soon after, leaving the kingdom in the hands of young Akbar.

Following this confused and troubled period, Agra was to emerge as the Mughal capital, chosen in preference to Delhi, perhaps by an accident of history. The story goes that Delhi fell in Akbar’s estimation because of an attempt on his life.

Akbar’s tolerance towards Hindus won him immense popularity. His spiritual court at Agra soon became a centre for the quest of truth. He received divines from several religious denominations: black-robed Jesuits, Chinese Taoist and Confucian scholars, Buddhist monks from Sri Lanka, Sufis and Zoroastrians. Finally, Akbar arrived at his own quintessence of the religions of the world, the *Din-i-Ilahi*. Akbar’s new religion did not outlast him, but it was Akabar’s fervour for religious synthesis that laid him to Sheikh Salim Chisti, a Sufi mystic, who lived in the village of Sikri, 40 kilometres south-west of Agra.

In 1570, Akbar built the breathtaking city of Fatehpur Sikri as a token of devotion to the saint. Akbar and his court moved to what was probably the most splendid of Mughal capital. At Fatehpur Sikri could be found some of

1. Randhava, M.S., “Paintings of the Babur Nama”.
the most brilliant persons of the time. There was the poet Faizi and his brother Abul Fazl who wrote the sensitive biography of the king, the Akbar Namah. There was the witty Birbal and the matchless musician Tansen whose voice, it is said, could set alight a torch. Under Akbar’s patronage Surdas and Tusidas wrote the finest Hindi poetry that is known.

After fifteen years at Fatehpur Sikri, towards the end of his long reign, Akbar took his entourage to the northern borders where he fought a series of battles. Fatehpur Sikri was soon emptied and has remained so till today, a beautiful ghost city. Akbar died in 1605 and was buried at Sikandra, 8 kilometres north-west of Agra.

Thirty-six years old Jahangir came to the throne of the vast Mughal Empire. He ruled from the Agra Fort initially, where he installed a huge bell which could be pulled by a rope by anyone who sought justice from the king. But Jahangir, a man of letters and aesthetic taste, did not have his father’s tolerance.

It was in Jahangir’s time that British influence in India began to grow. To his court at Agra came, Captain William Hawkins and later Thomas Roe, the ambassador of James I. Roe’s journal describes the pomp and splendor, the drinking parties, and the hospitality of Jahangir’s court. Tactful and Diplomatic, Roe bargained successfully for a firman permitting the British to trade at Surat in 1615. In return Jahangir was promised exquisite painting and embroideries, enamel work and metal statuary from the West.

With the death of Jahangir in 1627, Nur jahan’s remarkable influence on Mughal affairs was cut short. In the disputed succession she supported the emperor’s youngest son Shariyar, married to her daughter by Sher Afghan, but he was defeated in battle and blinded by his half brother, Shah Jahan. Nur Jahan had no choice but to go into retirement at Lahore. Shah Jahan, the great Mughal, came to the throne at Agra in 1628 and ruled for thirty peaceful years.
But in the fourth year of his reign, Shah Jahan was struck by tragedy. After nineteen years of marriage, his beloved wife, the beautiful Mumtaz Mahal, died giving birth to their fourteenth child. The emperor was wild with grief but from the depths of his sorrow he resolved to create the world’s greatest monument of love. That was to be the Taj Mahal.

Shah Jahan lacked Akbar’s genius but was a capable administrator. He had inherited an overflowing treasury of gold, silver and precious jewels. Drawing from his inexhaustible coffers, he created Mughal India’s most lavish extravaganzas. His peacock Throne of emeralds, diamond and solid silver took seven years to build and cost about twelve million pounds sterling.

And yet Shah Jahan had been educated by the unworldly Sufis. From them he had learnt grammar, logic, mathematics, astronomy and geology. He was well-versed in Arabic, the language of the Koran, and in Persian, the language of the court. European travelers have left accounts of the magnificence of Shah Jahan’s court which functioned successively from Agra, Lahore and Delhi.

In 1638, Shah Jahan transferred his court to Delhi where he built the Walled City of Shahjahanabad. That marked the end of an era of glory for the city of Agra. Court patronage had given a tremendous impetus to trade and commerce. Agra had become an important textile centre (which is still is), and artisans, bankers, jewellers, and merchants from many parts of the country had gathered in the city. It was also a cultural centre with poets, artists and musicians. But towards the end of Shah Jahan’s reign, Agra’s importance declined. The peasantry and the artisans were in distress. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the Jats, the Marathas and the Mughals fought for the supremacy of the Agra region. For a time Agra was part of the Gwalior state, ruled by the Scindias. In 1803, when the British power was firmly established with the Mughal emperor at Delhi in their protection, Agra too, became British territory. From 1833 to 1858 Agra was the capital of the North-West Province.
During the uprising of 1857, when the entire North-West Province was in turmoil, the city of Agra too was convulsed, with British and Indian residents fearing the worst. In July that year the rebel soldiers marched down from Fatehpur Sikri and ripped through the town. As fighting broke out, the Europeans took refuge in the Agra Fort.

After British authority was restored and even as the city was returning to normalcy, its population was afflicted by the famine of 1860. During British rule, Agra continued to be an intellectual centre and some of its citizens played an important role in the freedom movement. The British combined Agra and Oudh into the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh; the name was shortened to the United Provinces in 1935. After independence, the United Provinces was renamed Uttar Pradesh. Agra became the headquarter of Agra district with an area of over 4,800 square kilometers, and one of the leading cities of India’s most populous state.
3.2 Different monuments and paintings

3.2.1 Taj Mahal

For centuries, the Taj Mahal has inspired poets, painters and musicians to try and capture its elusive magic in word, colour and song. It is one of the most flawless architectural creations of the world. Since the 17th century, travellers have crossed continents to come and see this ultimate memorial to love, and few have been unmoved by its incomparable beauty.

Experiencing the Taj Mahal without being cognizant of its history is grossly irrelevant and absurd. The extravagant expression has not come easy. There underlays an ocean of emotions and a wild passion that led the king to erect such a masterpiece in snow-white marble. It's a monument, the only one, where perhaps, ever inch of the edifice, from one corner to the other, expresses the beauty of Mumtaz Mahal. Mughal emperor's Shah Jahan's intense feelings and warm-heartedness can be felt at the very first instant as you arrive here to fix your gaze upon one of the most phenomenal structures in the world.

The **Taj Mahal** is a mausoleum located in Agra, India, built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal. The Taj Mahal (also "the Taj") is considered the finest example of Mughal architecture, a style that combines elements from Persian, Indian, and Islamic architectural styles. In 1983, the Taj Mahal

Plate no. 91  **The Taj Mahal, Agra**
became a UNESCO World Heritage Site and was cited as "the jewel of Muslim art in India and one of the universally admired masterpieces of the world's heritage."  

While the white domed marble mausoleum is its most familiar component, the Taj Mahal is actually an integrated complex of structures. Building began around 1632 and was completed around 1653, and employed thousands of artisans and craftsmen. The construction of the Taj Mahal was entrusted to a board of architects under imperial supervision including Abd ul-Karim Ma'mur Khan, Makramat Khan, and Ustad Ahmad Lahauri. Lahauri is generally considered to be the principal designer.

In 1631, Shah Jahan, emperor during the Mughal Empire's period of greatest prosperity, was griefstricken when his third wife, Mumtaz Mahal, died during the birth of their fourteenth child, Gauhara Begum. Construction of the Taj Mahal began in 1632, one year after her death. The court chronicles of Shah Jahan's grief illustrate the love story traditionally held as an inspiration for Taj Mahal. The principal mausoleum was completed in 1648 and the surrounding buildings and garden were finished five years later. Emperor Shah Jahan himself described the Taj in these words:

"Should guilty seek asylum here,
Like one pardoned, he becomes free from sin.
Should a sinner make his way to this mansion,

All his past sins are to be washed away.
The sight of this mansion creates sorrowing sighs;
And the sun and the moon shed tears from their eyes.
In this world this edifice has been made;
To display thereby the creator's glory.

The Taj Mahal incorporates and expands on design traditions of Persian architecture and earlier Mughal architecture. Specific inspiration came from successful Timurid and Mughal buildings including; the Gur-e Amir (the tomb of Timur, progenitor of the Mughal dynasty, in Samarkand), Humayun’s Tomb, Itmad-Ud-Daulah’s Tomb (sometimes called the Baby Taj), and Shah Jahan’s own Jama Masjid in Delhi. While earlier Mughal buildings were primarily constructed of red sandstone, Shah Jahan promoted the use of white marble inlaid with semi-precious stones, and buildings under his patronage reached new levels of refinement.

The central focus of the complex is the tomb. This large, white marble structure stands on a square plinth and consists of a symmetrical building with an iwan (an arch-shaped doorway) topped by a large dome and finial. Like most Mughal tombs, the basic elements are Persian in origin.

The base structure is essentially a large, multi-chambered cube with chamfered corners, forming an unequal octagon that is approximately 55 metres (180 ft) on each of the four long sides. On each of these sides, a massive pishtaq, or vaulted archway, frames the iwan with two similarly shaped, arched balconies stacked on either side. This motif of stacked pishtaqs is replicated on the chamfered corner areas, making the design completely symmetrical on all sides of the building. Four minarets frame the tomb, one at each corner of the plinth facing the chamfered corners. The main chamber houses the false sarcophagi of Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan; the actual graves are at a lower level.

2. Sitapuri Sushil,
The marble dome that surmounts the tomb is the most spectacular feature. Its height of around 35 metres (115 ft) is about the same as the length of the base, and is accentuated as it sits on a cylindrical "drum" which is roughly 7 metres (23 ft) high. Because of its shape, the dome is often called an onion dome or *amrud* (guava dome). The top is decorated with a lotus design, which also serves to accentuate its height. The shape of the dome is emphasised by four smaller domed *chattris* (kiosks) placed at its corners, which replicate the onion shape of the main dome. Their columned bases open through the roof of the tomb and provide light to the interior. Tall decorative spires (*guldastas*) extend from edges of base walls, and provide visual emphasis to the height of the dome. The lotus motif is repeated on both the chattris and guldastas. The dome and chattris are topped by a gilded finial, which mixes traditional Persian and Hindu decorative elements.

The main finial was originally made of gold but was replaced by a copy made of gilded bronze in the early 19th century. This feature provides a clear example of integration of traditional Persian and Hindu decorative elements. The finial is topped by a moon, a typical Islamic motif whose horns point heavenward. Because of its placement on the main spire, the horns of the moon and the finial point combine to create a trident shape, reminiscent of traditional Hindu symbols of Shiva.

The minarets, which are each more than 40 metres (130 ft) tall, display the designer's penchant for symmetry. They were designed as working minarets — a traditional element of mosques, used by the muezzin to call the Islamic faithful to prayer. Each minaret is effectively divided into three equal parts by two working balconies that ring the tower. At the top of the tower is a final balcony surmounted by a chattri that mirrors the design of those on the tomb. The chattris all share the same decorative elements of a lotus design topped by a gilded finial. The minarets were constructed slightly outside of the plinth so that, in the event of collapse, (a typical occurrence with many tall
constructions of the period) the material from the towers would tend to fall away from the tomb.

The complex is set around a large 300-metre (980 ft) square charbagh or Mughal garden. The garden uses raised pathways that divide each of the four quarters of the garden into 16 sunken parterres or flowerbeds. A raised marble water tank at the center of the garden, halfway between the tomb and gateway with a reflecting pool on a north-south axis, reflects the image of the mausoleum. The raised marble water tank is called al Hawd al-Kawthar, in reference to the "Tank of Abundance" promised to Muhammad. Elsewhere, the garden is laid out with avenues of trees and fountains. The charbagh garden, a design inspired by Persian gardens, was introduced to India by the first Mughal emperor, Babur. It symbolizes the four flowing rivers of Jannah (Paradise) and reflects the Paradise garden derived from the Persian paridaeza, meaning 'walled garden'. In mystic Islamic texts of Mughal period, Paradise is described as an ideal garden of abundance with four rivers flowing from a central spring or mountain, separating the garden into north, west, south and east.

The main gateway (darwaza) is a monumental structure built primarily of marble which is reminiscent of Mughal architecture of earlier emperors. Its archways mirror the shape of tomb's archways, and its pishtaq arches incorporate the calligraphy that decorates the tomb. It utilizes bas-relief and pietra dura inlaid decorations with floral motifs. The vaulted ceilings and walls have elaborate geometric designs, like those found in the other sandstone buildings of the complex.

At the far end of the complex, there are two grand red sandstone buildings that are open to the sides of the tomb. Their backs parallel the western and eastern walls, and the two buildings are precise mirror images of each other. The western building is a mosque and the other is the jawab (answer), whose primary purpose was architectural balance, although it may

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1. Lall, Jhon, Taj Mahal And the glory of Mughal Agra (1982)
have been used as a guesthouse. The distinctions between these two buildings include the lack of *mihrab* (a niche in a mosque's wall facing Mecca) in the *jawab* and that the floors of *jawab* have a geometric design, while the mosque floor was laid with outlines of 569 prayer rugs in black marble. The mosque's basic design of a long hall surmounted by three domes is similar to others built by Shah Jahan, particularly to his *Masjid-Janah Numma*, or Jama Masjid, Delhi. The Mughal mosques of this period divide the sanctuary hall into three areas, with a main sanctuary and slightly smaller sanctuaries on either side. At the Taj Mahal, each sanctuary opens onto an enormous vaulting dome. These outlying buildings were completed in 1643.

The Taj Mahal was constructed using materials from all over India and Asia and over 1,000 elephants were used to transport building materials. The translucent white marble was brought from Rajasthan, the jasper from Punjab, jade and crystal from China. The turquoise was from Tibet and the Lapis lazuli from Afghanistan, while the sapphire came from Sri Lanka and the carnelian from Arabia. In all, twenty eight types of precious and semi-precious stones were inlaid into the white marble.
Paintings of Taj Mahal

Plate no. 93 *The Taj Mahal (view from across the river)*, *Oil on canvas*, by *Thomas Daniell*

**Description** - In this painting the Taj is seen reflected in the water from across the river Yamuna. Two elephants are climbing up the near bank. A palm tree and a small pavilion of the ‘new Taj’ are on the right, a pleasure boat on the left.

Plate no. 94 *Composition of hindu and Muslim architecture*, *Oil on canvas*, by: *Thomas Daniell*

**Description** - A large gopuram on the left dwarfs a mandapam (a shelter for religious functions). A procession and an elephant are near the entrance of *trisula* (the trident of Shiva) and a discus on a pillar to the right.
Plate no. 95 *The Taj Mahal, Agra, 1892, Oil on canvas*, by: Thomas Daniell

**Description:** The Taj Mahal is seen here from the opposite side of the river Yamuna with the monument reflected in the water. The foreground is full of movement with a procession of elephants, cavalry, foot soldiers, and others coming up the bank of the river. There are people making obeisance to a dignitary on the howdah of an elephant. To the right two palm trees and the “new Taj”. This exquisite painting was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1829.

Plate no. 96 *The Taj Mahal, at Agra, Oil on canvas*, by: Thomas Daniell

**Description:** In this picture artist produced the one view of the Taj, showing the gateway with the mausoleum in the background. The gateway is shown in a very clear manner. Many figures are shown under the gateway and in the foreground.
Description: The Taj Mahal is seen reflected in the water from across the river Jamuna. One elephant and a camel are moving near the bank. We can see some ruined on the right bottom corner and boats are floating in the river. A boat at the river edge is shown on the left bottom corner.

Description: The “garden view of the Taj Mahal taken immediately on entering it by the principal gate” that the Daniells drew has remained to this day the most classic and stereotyped view of the monument, particularly with photographers both amateur and professional.
**Description:** Here, the Taj, painted in winter, is seen in the distance beyond the Jamuna, the river cutting across the picture. In the foreground, people are seen approaching the river. A species of palm tree is placed in the right foreground. The river is used as a device to separate the ordinary form the magical. The Taj is painted in such an incredibly subtle manner that it appears to float through the winter mist.
Description: This view of 1905 portrays the Taj Mahal at sunset, silhouette against a brilliant twilight sky. Goodwin has captured the quality of light amid clouds which appears so briefly during an Indian sunset. The Taj Mahal takes on a mystical aspect and is seen to hover over the smoke that covers the Jamuna. Here again the river separates the extraordinary from the mundane. The powerful rendering of clouds and the radiant colour create a romantic image, a truly evocative experience of the Taj Mahal.
Plate no. 101 *The Taj Mahal, Agra* watercolour with body colour by Albert Goodwin

**Description:** Goodwin painted a somewhat symbolic view with the Taj Mahal set against a grey and menacing sky. The buildings within the garden dominate the composition and contrast with the expanse of foreground. Its emptiness seems to stress the power of Taj, towards which people are walking in procession as if on a pilgrimage.

Plate no. 102 *The Taj Mahal at sunrise*, watercolour on paper by Albert Goodwin

**Description:** In this painting Goodwin painted a drawn view of the Taj Mahal seen at a distance across the river. Lit by the early morning sun, it seems to rise like some “celestial city”. Villagers in the foreground approach a chhatri (umbrella like pavilion) on the banks of the Jamuna where a boat waits to ferry them across. Once again, much of Goodwin’s composition is taken up by a cloudy sky exquisitely and dramatically coloured to enhance the mood of the scene.
Description: This is the earliest known painting of the Taj Mahal by any artist, foreign or Indian. The Taj is seen from across the Jamuna River. a boat is shown on the bottom right corner and figures are roaming on the platform of the Taj Mahal. The image of the Taj is reflecting the in the water. We can see beautiful ambiance in the painting.

Description: In this painting artist has shown the Taj Mahal in the background and the garden is shown in the foreground. The clumps of trees are shown on the both side of the picture.
Description: The view of the Taj Mahal by the British artist William Simpson introduced a refreshing sensibility to a subject that was already becoming hackneyed. This picture shows the beautiful view of the Taj in the background and the foreground is filled with the charbagh garden of the Taj Mahal. many figures are roaming in the garden.

Description: In this painting artist introduced a poetic note with atmospheric effects into his topographical views. The middle of the painting is occupied by the monument. In the background eye-catching view of the blue sky is shown.
Description: In this painting of Taj Artist’s impressionistic style was particularly suited for capturing the shimmering effects of light mentioned by so many visitors but rarely expressed adequately in pictures, and combining “the flickering effects of sunlight, using an impressionist palette, with a sense of solidity of form”. Artist also painted some figures, who are watching Taj and he has also shown the shadow of the Taj in the pond.
**Description:** This is an unusual view of the Taj in watercolour by an unknown nineteenth-century Indian artist that provides a panoramic view of the complex as a royal procession is on its way to the monument. For some reason, however, the party has halted on the rough stone terrain. While the palanquin bearers have put down their load, the royal visitor has alighted from the elephant and stands a little closer to the centre of the picture, flanked by an umbrella bearers and a bodyguard. More bodyguards stand almost in the middle of the foreground, and look in the same direction as their master. There seems little doubt that the scene represents a specific occasion. The most likely explanation is that the author of this picture was accompanying a British artist engaged in sketching the Taj, and the princely party stopped out of curiosity, or for a break, or both. Even though we can not identify the painter or his curious visitors, the picture remains a rare depiction of a very specific historical moment and affords an unusual view of the moment.
Plate no. 109 *The Taj Mahal in morning light*, opaque watercolour on paper by *Sitaram*

**Description:** This is the beautiful watercolour painting showing the great monument in morning sunlight. The painting explores the play of light on the marble dome and in the lush, shadowy gardens and is ‘among the most poetic representations of the Taj’. The subtlety in tonal variation so evident here is characteristic of Sita Ram, the first Indian painter fully to appreciate and adopt the palette and style of English picturesque painting.

Plate no. 110 *Taj Mahal in Moon light*, opaque watercolour on paper by *Sitaram*

**Description:** This painting depicts the monument at moonlight. The picture reveals how brilliantly Sita Ram had mastered European techniques. In this painting in a moonlit night Taj Mahal shines like a dazzling pearl, especially in contrast to the ghostly vegetation in front.
Description: This painting depicts that the artist was obviously moved by the pathos of ShahJahan’s last years, for the frail, aged emperor is stretched out on his bed in the Jasmine Tower and sustaining himself with his daily dose of the Taj.

Plate no. 111  *The Passing of Shahjahan*, by Abanindranath Tagore

Description: The view of the Taj illustrated here is rather a strange composition, for neither in the impressive platform visible nor does the garden confirm to reality. The arrangement of the garden, with rows of plants in pots, and the foliage seem to have been lifted from another source, perhaps from a picture of an early nineteenth century British Indian mention. Four man figures also have been shown in the garden.

Plate no. 112 *The Taj Mahal and its Gardens*, oil on Canvas by Erastus Salisbury Field
Description: Artist has depicted a very calm and natural atmosphere in the painting. He has painted only main dome of Taj not minarets and other things. One figure is roaming near the pond.
Description: In this painting Artist’s view of the Taj Mahal and its garden are somewhat conventional, they reveal a sensitivity and gentle eloquence that characterize many of his Indian watercolours. The soft, muted hues of his rapid washes vividly capture the alluringly mysterious qualities of the monument in the early morning light in winter.

Description: This is a rarely painted view of Taj Mahal. Enclosed in the bright sunlight, only the rough outline of the Taj emerges from the background, while the vegetation and the reflection in the pool are only evanescent suggestions. This picture shows the some characteristics of child art like use of flat colours and drawing of Taj Mahal.
Description: To his painting Taj Mahal No. Congdon commented in 1955, “The Mahal in not a building. It is a prayer, breathing in the night like the moon. At dusk glows, whole swollen gold against the knighting sky, while in the river flats the vultures rip at a carcass and thread the current with blood. In the distance glimmer the cupolas of Akbar, the city of Agra.” In this picture artist has used flat and earth colours.
**Description:** This is the delicate drawing of the Taj Mahal with slight colour washes. It shows the tank and the buildings flanking it on both sides but not the garden in the foreground.

**Description:** This painting gives the idea of the second Taj, ‘the Black Taj’ which Shahjahan intended to build in black marble opposite the present mausoleum, on the site of the Mahtab Bagh. It goes back to Jean-Baptiste Tavernier who, when at Agra in1665, reported that ‘Shahjahan began to built his own tomb on the other side of the river, but the war with his sons interrupted his plan and Aurangzeb, who reigns at present, is not disposed to complete it.
Description: This is a rare picture from an early nineteenth century manuscript in the British Library provides vivid evidence of the boisterous parties held on the terrace of the Taj Mahal. In this picture of the painting we can find many similarities of Mughal miniature painting like in plant, trees, sky, birds and in the building also.
Description: This is one of the earliest known drawings of the Taj by an Indian artist is a charming freely drawn sketch. As the accompanying notation indicates, it was done on the spot. Artist has drawn the main building and minarets behind the trees.
Description: In popular culture the Taj has become a metaphor for excellence, the superlative, abstracted from its original context. It is used in advertisements to sell all sorts of products which have nothing at all to do with its being a tomb - jewellery, teabags, Scotch whisky, liqueur and beer. To promote the sale of alcohol with the image of the Taj Mahal is particularly ironic, because Shah Jahan as an orthodox Muslim was averse to drinking and touched wine only upon his father’s insistence.
**Description:** Congdon made this painting of the Taj, which was used for the announcement of an exhibition. Apart from the vigorous, lively delineation, it is interesting because it depicts the “Black Taj” and is the only known reaction by an artist to the myth that Shah Jahan intended to build a black replica of the Taj to serve as his own tomb.
**Description:** Taj was also painted on other media for popular consumption, particularly for foreign visitors. Ivory was the most common and most popular, probably because of its greater durability. In this painting, Taj Mahal is surrounded by the other monuments like Red Fort, Qutub Minar, Sikandra, Itmad daulha, and Golden Temple so there is no ambiguity about which building was considered the most important.
**Description:** This is an English blue and white Staffordshire plate decorated with a view of the Taj Mahal seen across the river. Produced by John Hall and Sons c. 1825, the pattern is called ‘Oriental Scenery: Tomb of the Emperor Shahjahan’. In this picture the monument has surrounded by a beautiful border which is designed by the attractive and lovely floral patterns.

![Plate with picture of the Taj Mahal, England](image1)

**Description:** A broach which combines a view of the monument alone with an elaborate gold setting would have been an exquisite gift – perhaps a memento for a bride.

![Broach with image of Taj Mahal, etched ivory in gold setting](image2)
Description: This picture shows the wood cut print of Taj Mahal. The whole background is occupied by the monument. In the foreground three figures are shown. This painting depicts the moonlight scene.

Description: This picture shows the Taj Mahal with morning mist. Taj is seen from the garden and we can see its reflection in the water. Many figures are shown in the foreground near the pool.
Description: This is same wood cut print like previous print. In this print artist has shown Taj Mahal in the night.

Description: In this picture the Taj and the garden occupies the whole background. Some figures are roaming near the pool and taj is reflecting in the water.
Description: This print is similar with previous wood print. In this picture the Taj Mahal is shown with in the night.

Description: This is a beautiful wood print of Taj Mahal and two grand red sandstone buildings, the one is mosque and the other is Jawab. In the mid foreground we can see a row of camels.
**Description:** In this picture the Taj is seen across the hilly area with some clumps of trees and in the foreground a row of camels with figures is shown.

**Description:** In this picture we can see the dome and the upper portion of minarets behind the hilly area. In the foreground again a row of camels with figures is shown.
Description: This is an ultimate wood print of the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal is shown with its charbagh garden and image of the Taj is reflecting in the water tank. Artist has used an attractive colour scheme.

Description: In this painting the side view of the Taj Mahal is shown with sunset. In the foreground we can see two trees behind a rock.
**Description:** This painting done in the miniaturist style. In this painting the mosque rises in the distance on the left, and the rest house is on the right. The central tank and part of the white marble mausoleum can be glimpsed through the central arch.

**Description:** This is the Bird’s eye view of the Taj Mahal. The painter of this picture created his ideograph of Taj Mahal according to projections, employed by “primitive” artists the world over, in which facades, walls, trees, figures, and minarets are seen head on, in their most characteristics views while the gardens, courtyards, and watercourses are shown as though viewed by a flying bird.
Description: This is the earliest known depiction of the Taj Mahal, combining Europeanizing perspective with the Mughal painting tradition, by a Lucknow artist, 1780s. It contrasts with the early Western view.

Description: In this painting from left to right are the Haveli of Khan-I Dauran, the Haveli of Agah Khan, the Taj Mahal, the aqueduct of the Taj, and the two elements of the garden of Khan-I Alam. This painting is company drawing by an Agra and Delhi artist.
Description: This painting shows the scene of *Sharad Poornima* and the Taj Mahal. Many people are gathered to watch the beauty of Taj Mahal in the moon light of the *Sharad Poornima*. The overall ambience in the painting is so beautiful. Artist has done realistic study of the whole view.

**Description:** The Taj Mahal is seen from across the river Yamuna. In this painting artist has produced a winter day by the use of different tones of blue colour.
Plate no. 142 The Taj, watercolour on paper by Dr. Chitralekha Singh

**Description:** in this painting we can see the front view of the Taj Mahal. in the foreground the pool is shown with many figures.

Plate no.143 Taj Mahal, watercolour on paper by Dr. Chitralekha Singh

**Description:** This picture shows the view of Taj Mahal and the clumps of trees in the foreground. The dome and two minarets of the Taj Mahal are shown behind the bushes.
Description: In this picture Taj Mahal is shown in the background and the clumps of plants in the mid background. In the foreground three lady figures are shown with musical instruments.

Description: The subject of this painting is related with the dream of ShahJahan. That he wanted to built same black Taj Mahal for him. In this painting artist has produced the image of the white Taj Mahal and the black Taj Mahal together.
Description: The subject of this painting is similar with previous painting, but the colour technique is different.

Description: This is a beautiful painting of Taj Mahal. The Taj is seen from across the river Yamuna and a dry tree is shown on the right.
Description: This painting mainly shows the dome of the Taj Mahal and many plants are in the foreground. The monochromatic tone of green is used.
3.2.2 Red Fort

**Agra Fort** is a UNESCO World Heritage site located in Agra, India. The fort is also known as **Lal Qila, Fort Rouge and Red Fort of Agra**. It is about 2.5 km northwest of its much more famous sister monument, the Taj Mahal. The fort can be more accurately described as a walled palatial city. It is the most important fort in India. The great Mughals Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jehangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb lived here, and the country was governed from here. It contained the largest state treasury and mint. It was visited by foreign ambassadors, travelers and the highest dignitaries who participated in the making of history in India.

According to legend Agra is very ancient site. In the 1500 century Sikandar Lodhi, The Delhi Sultan, established a fort of which nothing remains. This Lodhi ruler died at Agra in 1517 and was buried in Delhi, in an area called Lodhi Garden.

It was his son Ibrahim Lodhi whose defeat at the hands of Babur led to the beginning of Mughal rule in 1526 & the glorious rise of Agra as a favoured city. Sikander Lodhi built a small fort at Agra & some building situated 9 km away (on the Mathura road, north-west of Agra) at Sikandra, which was named after him. It is here that the third Mughal Emperor, Akbar, was buried in a spectacular tomb. When Akbar came to rule he was just 14 years old, but at the age of 23 he launched his first major architectural venture by knocking down the Lodhi fort and beginning the construction of the Akabarabad fort in Agra. The fort has irregular triangular shape with a
perimeter of 2.5 km. It longest side is placed parallel to the river to afford all the major palace room, a magnificent view of the bank of the river, the great expanse of water and gentle sunrise.

It is said that Akbar constructed this fort in place of the old Badalgarh fort, which was a strong foothold of the Rajput rulers. It is surrounded by a double thick wall, the outer wall being 40 feet high & the inner one about 70 feet high. The fort at Agra was surrounded by two big ditches. Out of these two, the inner ditch is still there while the outer ditch has been filled and there exist a road in place of it. Both the ditches were full of dreaded crocodile & turtles so that enemy may not cross them easily. This fort was started in 1565 A.D. and took 8 long years in its completion. The construction was entrusted to Kasim Khan who was commander-in-chief and governor of Kabul. The total sum which was spent on the construction was Rs. 35 lakhs.

This fort of Agra was a grand building which according to Abul Fazl, the famous historian, had about 500 stone buildings. But unfortunately only a few building still exists today

On the southern extremity of the fort, is the gate opened for the general public. This gate was built by Emperor Shahjahan after the name of the great Rajput Amar Singh Rathore. It is said that in 1644 A.D. in full court of emperor Shahjahan, Salabat Khan, the imperial treasurer insulted him on which Amar Singh slew Salabat Khan. This turned the Mughal army against Amar Singh. Riding on his horse back, he jumped of the high walls of the fort near the spot where now is built Amar Singh gate. His sincere horse was half in the ditch and half on the road and died at once. In the memory of this marvellous incident a horse in the red sandstone was built.

After crossing Amar Singh gate, the attention of a visitor is drawn by itself by a beautiful building called Jahagiri palace or Jahagiri mahal. The Jahagiri was built in 1570 by Akbar and one of the few structures in the fort that survives from his reign. And was not re-constructed nor clothed in marble
by his grandson Shahjahan. It is stately building with rows of ornate pillars with hanging brackets set around an open courtyard. The predominance of the columns and flat roofs is regarded by many scholars as yet another testimony to Akbar’s eclectic taste: his preference for Hindu architectural scheme, his many Hindu wives, his desire to establish a world religion, Din-i-Ilhai. Yet this palace of Akbar is more indicative of the fashion of the times exemplified in the forts of Gwalior, Orchha and Rajasthan.

North of the Jahagiri mahal is an open courtyard and a formal garden called Angoori Bagh (the grave garden) designed like a Jig-Saw puzzle with interlocking bordered flower-beds perhaps flowers in each segment were colour co-ordinated to create the intricate design of the Persian carpet. It was establish by Akbar the great for his empress and other ladies of his harem. It is said that the soil for this was brought from Kashmir. The garden was surrounded by double storeyed building on three sides.

Behind Angoori Bagh, on the river front is one of the loveliest enclosed complexes of the fort called Khas mahal, constructed by Shahjahan in 1636. The middle area has a marble courtyard, a rectangular pool with frilled edges, and a fountain. The building behind it as in the Delhi fort is a flat-roofed pavilion with many rows of cusped arches and lattice marble screen that lookout on to the river. On either of this pavilion are smaller enclosed courtyards name after the emperor’s daughters. These elegant pavilion built in marbles have roofs that are covered with copper tiles and are referred to as the golden pavilions. The central one is larger with a quaint curved ceilings; the design is said to have been derived from the thatched bamboo huts if Bengal. The graceful curve roof motive was reproduced in stone and became a popular feature in later Mughal and Rajasthan palaces after eastern India was conquered by Akbar in 1574-76.

The Sheesh mahal lies on the north east corner of the Angoori Bagh and is palace apartment decorated with mirrors embedded in the walls and roofs. It was used as a dressing room by the ladies if the Harem and its walls
in-laid with beautiful small mirrors. It is situated towards the north of Khas mahal. It was built by Shahjahan in 1630 A.D. in the form of a Turkish bath for the use of his family members. It consists of 2 halls and 2 tanks, the one for hot water and other for cold water. These chambers were paved with marble floors carved and in-laid with design of fish. In the twilight of small and tiny lamps, reflecting their beams all round the Mughal emperor used to enjoy himself with many of his beautiful wives. The fountains were payed with scented water rolling on the floors. This place was as a heaven on earth where beauty, charm and sex were cultured freely but for the rulers only.

Beyond, in the same corner is Mussaman Burj (the octagonal tower) also called Samman Burj or Jessamine Burj, the Jessamine tower? It was built by Jahagir for his empress Noorjahan. Later on it was remodelled by Shahjahan for Mumtaj Mahal.

The protruding octagonal bastion of the fort afforded a lovely uninterrupted view of the river and allowed gentle breeze to vaft the marble screens. Utilising this ideal location, the rooms have been decorated with fine stone work and in-laid designs, niches for lamps and books, and quite alcoves. In 1658, Shahjahan was deposed by his youngest son Aurangzed and to add a touch of tragedy to this romantic setting, it is said that here he spent his last seven ailing years until his death in 1668 under the care of his daughter Jahanara. It was here that Shahjahan, the once great emperor, used to sit and gaze at the Taj Mahal, the monument he erected in the memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal. From the fort there is a commanding view of the Taj Mahal further downstream. In front of the Samman Burj is a shallow cistern of semi
precious stone. Towards the west wards of the Samman Burj there was a beautiful marble verandah, which was demolished by Lord Warren Hastings and its parts were exported to England. At the time of an attack on Agra fort in 1803 A.D. the marble screen to the north of this building, was damaged by cannon-shots but were repaired later-on.

From the burj, a few steps northwards lead to the Dewan-E-Khas, the Hall of private audience which was completed by Shahjahan in 1637 which was towards the river side. It consists of two big halls. The pillars and archers of this dignified building are in-laid with semi precious stones and coloured flowers. Its ceiling was decorated with golden colours and the floors with shining marbles slabs which were taken away by the Jats during their occupation of Agra. It is said, that this building too was made by the same artisans, who mode the Taj Mahal. Dewan-E-Khas was the place where royal durbars or meetings were held in which the Mughal emperor has some important confidential matters with his ministers and the ambassadors of the court. The famous peacock thrown of Shahjahan was placed here. Later it was taken to Delhi by Aurangzeb and later on it was taken away by the invaders, and is now present in Tehran.

In front of the DewaE-Khas is a large courtyard which (presumably) once has a fish pond as it is called macchi bhawan or fish building. To the north-west of the bhawan is a tiny mosque specifically designed by Shahjahan for the royal women of the fort and is called Nagina Maszid the gem mosque. The ladies of the harem perform their prayers in it. Its appearance is small yet it is very beautiful like a gem. There is a door in its southern wall which opens into the Meena Bazaar. There are two other mosques in this fort, one called Meena Maszid for the private use of the emperor. It was built by Emperor Aurangzeb for the use of Shahjahan, when he was in captivity in Agra fort. It is built of white marble, measuring inside 22.30 feet and having a 22 feet square courtyard in from of the Taj. Towards the north side of Dewan-E-Aam, there is a beautiful building of white marble, built by emperor Shahjahan
between 1647-1654 at the cost of Rs. 3 lakhs. It had three gates, two to be used by the ladies of the Harem and one for the general public. Its gates are made of red sandstone but two of the gates which were meant for the harem ladies have been closed. The courtyard of the mosque is paved with white marble. In the middle of it there is a small tank. In its south-east corner, there is a marble pillar which was used to judge the time of offering prayer of Namaz. The interior of this mosque was divided by a row of pillars into three parts. There are two chambers on each side, for the used of the ladies of the harem and have seating capacity of 90 people at a time. There are three big domes on the mosque; since some beautiful pearls were hanged in golden chain in the ceiling of it hence it has been named as Pearl mosque of Moti Maszid.

A large congregational Friday mosque, **Jama Maszid**, it is situated from of Agra fort railway station. It was built by emperor Shahjahan as per his dear daughter Jahan Ara Begum’s wish, at the cost of Rs. 5 lakhs and took a period of 5 years in construction and was completed in 1648 A.D. It is based on the platform of 11 feet high in an area of 380 x 270 feet. It has got three gates and three compartments, each surmounted by a dome built of white and red sandstone in a zig-zag style. In the courtyard of the mosque there is tank in its centre for the ablutions of the Namazees or the worshipers. There is a grave of one “Darvesh” in a small underground chamber. The mosque has fine archways in its front. There are some rooms on both the sides having curtains, meant for the royal ladies. Thousands of Namzees perform their prayer of Namaz on every Friday and on every New Year day.

In front of Macchi Bhawan, on the western side approached by a staircase, is a hall of public audience **Dewan-E-Aam**. Here Shahjahan is said to have sat on his famous peacock throne supported by pillar embedded with emeralds and figures of peacock studded with the rarest and finest gens (which was stolen by Nadir Shah in 18th Centaury and what remains of the throne is now in Iran). Similar to the one in the Delhi Red fort, the Dewan-E-
Aam is a hall of rows of cusped arches. From whichever angle you look at the wavy arched, they seem to replicate themselves, their branches echoing the exuberance of their form.
**Paintings of Red Fort**

Plate no.151  *Bird’s eye view of the Red Fort, Agra, on the banks of the river Jamuna*, Gouache, by Delhi-Agra artist

**Description:** inscribed in Persian with identifications of the various parts of the fort: naqshah-I qul’ah-I akbarabad; on picture in section in above the river: buland bagh, itmad daulah, moti bagh, chini ka roza, taj ganj; below the river: shah burj, diwan-i-khas, musamman burj, darya, shahjahan Mahal, burj-i-bangali; proceeding downwards: tasbih khana masjid, makan-i-daud beg khan, havaili-ya dan shah, diwan-i-am, haathi pol, naqqar khana, bhana burj, amar singh darvazah, khizri- chauk-i-qila, phool darvazah.
Description: This painting shows the beautiful view of Red Fort across the river Jamuna. The Taj Mahal is visible at the far left, so it’s merged with the background of the painting. On the right, before the fort, are the remains of the Haveli of Dara Shikoh, serving as a repoussé; Hodges found its ruins dangerous to explore. So many people have been shown as sitting in the boats which are floating in the river Jamuna.
**Description:** This is the painting of the Samman Burj or Jasmine Tower in the Agra fort includes the Taj Mahal in the distance. Of all Goodwin’s paintings this is the most topographically correct. It shows the Jasmine Tower in the middle ground, and in the distance, the Taj Mahal, almost as if the marble mausoleum were a mirage. The Jamuna is again used as the dividing line between the reality of the tower in this case and the fugitive nature of the Taj itself. This is the view that Shah Jahan could well have had during his eight years as prisoner in the fort. The handling of paint to convey the quality of marble, sunlight catching the Taj, and gold on the dome in the foreground is extremely subtle.
Description: In this painting artist has shown the Moti Masjid within the Red fort, Agra with erroneous inscription ‘South Gate of the fort at Agra’. The watercolour painting illustrates the artist's unique ability to combine influences from Indian miniaturist techniques, such as the use of multiple perspectives, with the English picturesque style, visible in the subtle but atmospheric tonal variations.
**Description:** In this picture the image of Moti Masjid is shown in the middle with its forecourt and the entrance gate are shown on the left and on the right. The inscription is written on the bottom. This picture has an attractive border with carved design.

Plate no. 156 *Moti Mosque in Red Fort, Agra*, watercolour on paper by *Jaipur Artist*

**Description:** This painting shows the Moti Mosque of Red Fort. In this painting brown and blue colours are used mainly. Painting portrays the architectural drawing of Moti Mosque as drawn in the company style. It seems that in his painting artist wants to capture all the beauty and glory of the Mosque.
Description: This is the beautiful painting of Diwan-i-khas, the hall of private audience, was painted in 19th century. This painting gives the idea of the painter that how he copied jewel-like quality of the hall. He has shown the architectural detail of the hall with correct light, shade and colours. Even the finest camera of today cannot take colour photograph of this artistic excellence.

Description: In this Painting artist has shown the Mussaman Burj of Red Fort and in the foreground greenery is shown.
Description: In this painting the first river side tower left of centre is the Musamman Burj, the Octagonal or Jasmine Tower. To the left of it is the white, symmetrical Khas Mahal. At a distance to the right are the three domes of the Pearl Mosque. This is among fifteen drawings in the India Office collection which seem to have belonged to George’ Steel, who served in the Bengal Engineers and was posted at Agra from 1807 to 1813.
3.2.3 Sikandra

From Agra (8 km. on the road to Mathura and Delhi) is Sikandra, a small town named after the Lodi king of derivative name who ruled between 1489 and 1517. There are a few monuments of this period but the town is famed because it was here that the Mughal emperor Akbar was buried. It is a very special mausoleum, not only because it commemorates a great emperor but for its unusual style and form. Sikandra is the last resting place of the Mughal emperor Akbar. Akbar was the greatest of the Mughal emperors and one of the most secular minded royalties of his time. He was the heir to a long tradition of oriental refinement, a great patron of the arts, literature, philosophy and science.

A visit to Akbar's monument opens before one, the completeness of Akbar's personality as completely as the Taj Mahal does of Mumtaz Mahal's. Akbar's vast, beautifully carved, red-ochre sandstone tomb is set amidst a lush garden. Akbar himself planned his own tomb and selected a suitable site for it. To construct a tomb in one's lifetime was a Tartary custom which the Mughals followed religiously.

Akbar died in 1605, and according to legend, had not constructed his tomb during his lifetime though he had approved of a plan. Work on the tomb started the year of his death and his son Jahangir, the reigning emperor, saw to its completion, though he was not over-pleased with its rather unconventional design. The tomb at Sikandra carries the
characteristics flavour of those airy tiered pavilions of Akbar’s fort and Fatehpur Sikri.

The mausoleum stands in a big garden called as Bahishtabad in an area of 150 acres, and is enclosed by a huge wall about 25 feet high having 4 gates towards all the four sides. In the middles of each enclosing wall is a monumental gateway. The whole garden is divided into four equal quarters on the conventional charbhag plan. Each quarter is separated by a high terrace or raised path with a narrow shallow water channel running at the center. Each terrace has in the center, a tank with fountains.

The main entrance gateway of Sikandra is extremely beautiful and is situated on the south side. It is made of red sandstone. Its main door was made of sandal wood, which was taken away by the Jats. Formerly the roof of this gate was decorated with silver and gold which was taken over by the Jats during their short rule. The upper storey of the gate has a ‘Naubat Khana’, from where the big kettle Drums were played in the morning to evening in the honour of the dead emperor. The roof has got four couples marble and red stone which is surrounded by beautiful ‘Kangura’ work. The exterior portion is profusely decorated with white marble inlay work. On either sides of the gate way are built courtyards of red sandstone, which are called ‘Nau-Mahals’.

A broad paved causeway lead to the tomb, which has five storeys and is in the shape of a truncated pyramid. The main tomb has a unique square design which is unparalleled by all other Mughal buildings. The ground floor has spacious cloisters on all four sides except in the middle of the southern side. The cloisters are divided into numerous bays by massive piers & arches. Each bay measures 22 feet square. The centre of the southern side is occupied by a vestibule, which has been ornamented very profusely with exquisite carvings, artistic paintings & inlay work in geometric and floral designs. An inclined and descending passage leads from this vestibule to the mortuary

1. Indian Monuments through the Ages, by Indian Society of Engineering Geology
chamber. The tombstone of Akbar is placed in the centre of this room. The Mausoleum proper stands on a marble platform of 496 feet square and 30 feet high. Geometrical designs achieved by the mosaics of glazed tiles or of colored stones, predominate the tomb. The mosaic work is generally in the tass eleated style, that is, square or rectangular pieces of colored stones were assembled and arranged together to form patterns. Semi-precious stones were inlaid into a hollowed depression in the whit marble slab by Emperor Jahangir later on. Akbar's daughters Shakrul Nisha Begum and Aram Bano are also entombed on this floor. The second storey has an arcaded verandah on each side which is composed of 23 bays. The use of an ornamental arch and square pillar has brought about unique composition. These storeys are smaller in size than the one below it. They have an identical arrangement of arches supported on pilllars and chhatris attached on the exterior to each façade. The fifth storey is entirely in white marble as against the lower storeys which are finished in red sandstone.

Near the main gate of Akbar’s tomb towards the south-east side, is a beautiful building called Sheesh-Mahal or the palace of Mirror? It was constructed by Jahangir for his beloved consort Noor-Jahan. Its beauty is indescribable but its remains are in a dilapidated condition today.

Today, Sikandra, the peaceful resting place of the Akbar, is a site that greets you to step back into history and get a glimpse of the eventful life and period of Akbar the Great. Built in the Indo-Saracenic architectural style, Akbar’s tomb has towering arched gates, green lawns on which you can see grazing deers. Moreover, on the road from Sikandra to Agra, you can see numerous tombs and also two Kos minars ‘milestones’.
Paintings of Sikandra

Plate no. 161 *Tomb of the Emperor Akbar, Secundra*, watercolour on paper, published in Indian Heritage, 1982

**Description:** In this painting the Sikandra is painted in miniature style. Exactly same colours have been used which are on the walls of Sikandra.

Plate no. 162 *Sikandra, Agra*, *Oil on canvast*, by: *L. N. Tashkar*

**Description:** This painting clearly shows the main entrance gate of Sikandra. Many figures can be seen in local apparels with few horse carts on the side Painting. This painting gives the idea of local fare which has been hosted as it is crowded with local people. Colours have turned dim and dull in the painting and it is shown in three dimensional views.
Description: The print gives a clear idea of the manner in which the Daniells’ travelled during this stage of their journey when they attached themselves to a party bound for Agra. A large encampment of tents is set up just outside the main gateway and the scene is busy with the British, their servants and bodyguard. In the left foreground are high ranking officers, shades by a parasol; next to them are Bengal sepoys, wearing ‘sundial’ turbans. A palanquin and its attendants wait outside the tent. Incomplete sketch of minarets is the main attraction and force us to think that when the painting was done, the minarets were in the midst of construction. Figures are shown in a realistic manner without any abstraction and earth colours are used in the building.
**Description:** This traditional view of a Mughal monument, inscribed in both English and Persian, may have been painted for an Indian patron. The painter of this picture created his ideograph of Akbar’s tomb according to projections, employed by “primitive” artists the world over, in which facades, walls, trees, figures, and minarets are seen head on, in their most characteristics views while the gardens, courtyards, and watercourses are shown as though viewed by a flying bird. This ancient approach offers certain advantages: it enables us simultaneously to see from the sides and from above, and to gain a much fuller idea of each element in the structure. It also produces a highly appealing picture, with no violation of the surface’s two dimensional harmony, and in this case transforms Akbar’s tomb into a sort of mandala, the Buddhist and Hindu psychocosmogram. On the other hand, it tells us very little either about relative proportion – the gardeners are tall as trees – or of the “feel” of surfaces. It presents the idea instead of the appearance, the spirit rather then the substance.
Description: This painting shows the main building of Sikandra. Colours have turned dull in some portions of the painting and red and blue colours are used mainly. Painting portrays the architectural drawing of Sikandra as drawn in the company style. It seems that with the use of greenish and bluish tone, artist has shown the affect of water in the front part of the painting.

Description: This is an architectural drawing of main building of Sikandra. Due to black and white photograph of the painting, details can not be extracted. Complete background is occupied by the main building.
**Description:** I found black and white photograph of this painting also. This painting also shows the main dome of Sikandra. In front of the building six figures are seen they are three men, one lady and two cows. They are in sitting and standing position in the garden. Building is shown in three dimensional views.

**Description:** A tomb is facing left with three and two cupolas above the entrance. In the foreground ruined surrounding is shown with some figures. The minarets of the tomb are incomplete.
3.2.4 ITIMAD-UD-DAULAH

This is one of the most attractive structures in Agra, built across the Yamuna River, and is approached by road over a crowded bridge. Itmad-ud-Daulah is the first white marbled building of the Mughal architecture before the Taj Mahal was built. Due to this it is also known as Baby Taj or Mini Taj. The tomb, set within a garden, resembles a jewel box and is completely dressed in marble and intricate inlaid stone work. The story of the man who is buried here is as romantic as the tomb. Mirza Ghiyas-ud-Din Ghiyas Beg (later to be called Itimad-ud-Daulah) was a poor merchant in Persia who travelled to India in search of work. On the way his wife gave birth to a baby girl. Since they had nothing to eat the desperate parents decided to abandon the new-born child. Her wails carried by the desert air forced the parents to return and pick her up. The fortunes of Ghiyas Beg seemed to have turned with the arrival of this little girl, for soon he found a caravan which brought him to the emperor Akbar. Ghiyas Beg quickly rose to become Akbar’s trusted Treasurer and Minister, and later served in the court of Jahangir and was honoured with the title of Itimad-ud-Daulah, the pillar of the state.

His lucky daughter was called Mehr-un-Nissa, the sun of womankind. She grew to be a fabled beauty but became a young widow when her husband died (or was murdered) in Bengal. She returned to the court of Jahangir where her father was employed. The young amorous Emperor Jahangir saw her, fell in love, and eventually married her. She came to be called Nur Jahan, the light
of the palace, and Nur Jahan, light of the world. Nur Jahan, whose fate prevented her from being abandoned in the desert, became one of the most powerful personalities in Jahangir’s court. It was she who had this lovely tomb built in Agra for her father Itimad-ud-Daulah (who died in 1622) and later constructed her husband’s tomb (in much the same style) in Lahore. Nur Jahan had a brother whose daughter was given in marriage to Jahangir’s son and heir to be, Shah Jahan. It was for her, Mumtaz Mahal, the chosen one of the place, that Shah Jahan built the tomb called Taj Mahal.

Itimad-ud-Daulah, the poor Persian merchant, father and grandfather of two of the greatest Mughal queens, was buried in this tranquil little enclosed garden set against the open skyline beside the river, an idea that was used later in the Taj Mahal. The tomb stands on a low platform and is rectangular, with four minars or domed towers growing out of its four corners. The roof is flat and at the centre is a small roofed pavilion (a sort of single-storey version of Akbar’s Tomb on Sikandra). What makes this building so special and a landmark in Mughal architecture is that it is completely encased in white marble and inlaid with precious gems, with some of the most intricate and beautiful marble screen-work – an undeniable forerunner to the design of the Taj Mahal.

It is the first building of Mughal architecture before the existence of the Taj, which was made of white marble. This rectangular shaped tomb of white marble is enclosed by a beautiful garden. The garden is fenced by high walls on three sides and the fourth side opens towards river Jamuna, which gives a beautiful view of the city. The main entrance gate is made of red sand stone, with a doubled storied structure which has got inlay work of white marble. Towards its and other towards Jamuna, a beautiful stone Baradari is there. Below this Baradari, there are some rooms which were provided with curtains of Khas-Mahal and were used as a cool retreat from the summer heat. The upper chambers were used as bathrooms by the royal ladies.
The tomb was built in the famed Char Bagh style that Itmad-ud-Daulah had himself laid out six years before his death 1622. The monument is beautifully conceived in the white marble with mosaic and lattice. The tomb is not a very large structure as Taj Mahal with a height of only 21 m and a dome-roofed octagonal minaret of 12 m each at each corner. More than its style of architecture that is sometimes called as flawed by the experts; it is the inlay work or pietra dura on the walls of mausoleum that makes it extremely attractive. Marble screens of geometric latticework permit soft lighting of the inner chamber. On the engraved walls of the chamber is the recurring theme of a wine flask with snakes as handles. The main chamber is richly decorated with mosaics and semi-precious stones inlaid in the white marble. According to some historians, the concept and skills of Pietra dura must have been imported from European home of 16th century Florence to India. Though there are some differences like Florentine pietra dura is figurative whereas Indian version is essentially decorative.

Itmad-ud-daulah also contains some splendid specimens of incised painting on stucco in the interior. The ceiling space over the dado and alcoves is covered with ingeniously patterned paintings. The central ceiling over the cenotaphs has a marvelous geometrical design with the splendour of butterfly wings. Chinese-clouds pattern over the dado borders, adds lightness to the whole setting and the stunning two colour effect is obtained by removing the heavy colour pigment painted over the white plaster. The few structure weaknesses are more than amply compensated by the gorgeous decoration with coloured stones on white marble which, as Aldous Huxley said, covers a multitude of sins. The ceiling was decorated with gold and silver, was scrapped away by the Jats during their short occupation of Agra, but were repaired later on by Lord Curzon in 1905 A.D. In the surrounding chambers are the graves of other family members of Noor Jahan.
Paintings of Etmad Daulha

Plate no. 170

*Tomb of Itimad-ud-Daula, Agra* watermark, 1816

**Description:** In this painting artist has copied the actual front image of the tomb and has used exactly the same patterns of design through lattice work, arches and boundaries. Painting is flat and shows a clear view of jewel pattern used as there is absence of natural background. Floral pattern border is used to make the painting beautiful and attractive. Artist has remarked the painting by writing the name and place of the building i.e. “*Tomb of Etamudowla at Agra*”
Description: This painting depicts the finest drawing of Etmad Daulha and the painter has simulated the beautiful architectural work. Painting even shows the inner and deepest work of arches, boundaries and gate but lacks side border in the painting. Staircases provided on the pathway enhance the charm of the painting. An attempt to represent the building in three dimensional views is done. Painter’s brilliance can be judged as it looks less as a painting and more as an actual photograph.
Description: This picture depicts the inside view of the tomb which gives completely emphasis on the interior work. On the flour we can see geometrical patterns, inlay work on the ceiling and floral patterns on the wall. The two graves are shown in the foreground.
3.2.5 **FATEHPUR SIKRI**

An emperor builds a magnificent city as an act of gratitude to a penniless saint, makes it the capital of his empire and then, for some inexplicable reason, abandons it. Fatehpur Sikri is a city that an emperor forgot. After just fourteen years of life, the palaces of Akbar’s great City of Victory fell silent. Its echoing corridors still seem to wait for the king to return.

South-west of Agra is the deserted imperial city Fatehpur Sikri, one of India’s most alluring and breathtaking monuments. Built by the Mughal Emperor Akbar, this royal city is one of a kind. Every building, pavement and courtyard in the complex is completely covered in red sand-stone. It has a wonderful sense of space and freedom, a perfect combination of intricate workmanship and architecture on a monumental scale.

The royal road from Agra to Fatehpur Sikri (37 Km.) linking the two imperial cities was once lined with shops and stalls selling merchandise to Mughal courtiers. As one approaches (from Agra to Bharatpur) a high long stony ridge rises out of the plains aligned from south-west to north-east. The fort wall runs an 11 Km. circuit around the ridge while on the north-western side there was a huge lake (now dry) that supplied water and served the fortress as a natural line of defence. This hillock was once the retreat of a celebrated Chisti saint called Shaikh Salim. By the end of the fifteenth century there were several Sufi orders in northern India. The most popular was the Chisti order with its network of saints, such as Khwaja Moin-ud-Din Chisti who settled in Ajmer (thirteenth century), and Nizam-ud-Din Auliya in Delhi. These Sufi teachers attracted thousands who came to hear their teachings of love and devotion. Later their tombs became places of pilgrimage where vast numbers would gather to revere their masters.

In 1569 the Mughal Emperor Akbar, after the capture of the fort of Ranthambhor, came to the hamlet of Sikri to see Shaikh Salim. The young
emperor was 27 years old, but still childless as three children had died in infancy. Shaikh Salim prophesied that he would have not one but three sons. The following year a son was born and called Salim in deference to the saint. In gratitude emperor Akbar began to construct a great mosque at this site. The saint died in 1572 and a tomb for Shaikh Salim (or Salim Chisti) was built within the mosque complex. It is still a venerated place of pilgrimage, especially for childless women who come and tie a thread on the lattice windows of the tomb chamber as a reminder of an unfulfilled desire; untying it when their wish is granted, believing that like Akbar’s wish, theirs too will be granted. When the royal Salim (later Jahangir, the next Mughal emperor) was a year old, construction of the fort and the palaces began in earnest, and continued until 1585. Emperor Jahangir describes the beauty of the site in his memories: my revered father, regarding the village of Sikri, my birth place, as fortunate to himself, made it his capital, and in the course of fourteen and fifteen years the hills and desert, which abounded in beasts of pray, were converted into a magnificent city, comprising numerous gardens, elegant edifices, and pavilions of great beauty. After the conquest of Gujarat, the village was named Fatehpur: the town of victory.¹

The mystery is that after fourteen year of occupation, Akbar moved away from Sikri in 1585 and never returned. He first moved court to Lahore and then chose to return to Agra. Fatehpur Sikri was never again the capital of the Mughal Empire. Akbar was the first Mughal king with the means and the opportunity to build extensively. His predecessors had ruled in uncertain times with Humayun even losing his kingdom for a while. It was Akbar who laid the foundations of an empire and he planed this city as a symbol of his power. For Akbar, fatehpur Sikri proved to be extremely lucky and the fortune of the mighty emperor are woven into every buildings of yhis beautiful city. It was during this period that he expanded his empire, till it was so large that it virtually covered the entire Indian subcontinent. In 1572 Akbar conquered the

¹  Lall, John “Taj Mahal and the glory of Mughal India” 1982
fertile cotton and indigo plains of Gujarat and its famous sports which had links with Persia, Egypt, and Arabia. To celebrate his triumph and the addition of this enormous wealth to his treasury he built Buland Darwaza, a royal southern entrance to the mosque and named his new capital Fatehpur Sikri, the City of Victory. The gateway is approached by a steep flight of steps that add height and majesty to the entire structure (which is 54 metres high). The Buland Darwaza is designed coloured sand stone and marble. On one side is a deep well where children today make a quick buck from the tourists with their exhibitionist dives.

The Buland Darwaza leads into the grand Jama Masjid of Fatehpur Sikri which stands at the south-western end of the royal city complex. The mosque was conceived as the largest in the kingdom. The vast prayer area in red sand stone is surrounded by cells for the mullahs or priests. A high wall with gateways on three sides opens into a huge courtyard, 111 by 139 meters, making it one of the largest of its kind in the Mughal kingdom.

At the heart of Akbar’s city is the Dargah of Sheikh Salim Chisti. It is one of the most significant Sufi shrines of the region and one of the finest and most famous examples of marble work anywhere in the world. The entrance has four slim pillars with unusual serpentine struts that curved upwards to the roof. The tomb stone within is covered by cloth and lies under a canopy of ebony, mother of pearl, and brass. The square tomb chamber is surrounded by a corridor (for circumambulation) with lattice marble jalis of a quality unmatched anywhere in the world. The jalis are linked together by a series of ornate marble pillars with branching...
brackets. The tomb has a low dome and heavy protruding eaves that hang over the edge of the roof like a decorative canopy. Its design and ornamentation is traced to contemporary tombs of Gujarat, the region that Akbar had annexed. The tomb of Salim Chisti is a beautiful monument to the Sufi saint who, amongst other things, greatly influenced the life of Akbar, one of the greatest Mughal emperors. Often you will see bands of men with musical instruments sitting in the courtyard next to the dargah. They are the qawwal singers who make the evening magical with their folk styled songs of devotion or qawwals.

. On the periphery, and as you enter the fort area of the royal city, there are service apartments and stables along with palaces constructed by courtiers invited to build at the site. The royal complex is entered through the Diwan-i-Am on the north-eastern side, at the opposite end of the city from the mosque. There is also an entrance to the private quarters from the Jama Masjid. The Diwan-i-Am is an enclosed space surrounded by colonnades, and on the western face is the pavilion where the emperor sat in honour surrounded by his courtiers. The private courtyards are magnificent open spaces paved in red sandstone, and the palace buildings are aligned like a string of rectangular blocks to one another. Contemporary architecture dictated that these palace buildings were themselves independent units encased within high walls and designed around an open courtyard. The spacious mardana or courtyard behind the Diwan-i-Am is surrounded by several interesting structures; through the function and purpose of some of them remain an enigma. To the north is a square red sandstone building standing by itself a little aloof and self-composed, referred to as the Diwan-i-Khas. The building from the exterior has two storeys, the upper with a deep hanging eave around it like a hood and the lower floor is demarcated externally by a balcony supported by decorative brackets. The flat roof has a tall kiosk at each of the four corners. Inside, it appears that the building is not two-storeyed but one high-ceilinged room. The hall to the west of the Diwan-i-Khas is rather imaginatively called
Ankh Michauli and the local guides weave romantic tales of how the king played ankh michauli and blind man’s buff here with the women of the harem.

At the opposite end is a lovely architectural composition of a tank called Anup Talao with embellished edges and a platform at the centre that can be reached (like the catwalks of the Diwan-i-Khas) by narrow bridges. It is said that music performances were held here and acclaimed musicians of Akbar’s court, like Tansen, sat on the central platform entertaining the emperor. Anup Talao faces the double-storeyed private palace of the emperor called the Khwabgah or palace of dreams. Legend has it that the royal court singer Tansen used to perform from the seat in the centre of the pool.

At the north-eastern corner of the Anup Talao is another elegant miniature building of Fatehpur Sikri. It is called for some reason the Turkish Sultana’s house, believed to be the residence of a Turkish queen. However, it is unlikely that a queen’s palace would be situated outside the harem complex. This pavilion was probably one of the king’s personal palaces. It is square room surrounded by a verandah with a sloping roof. It is an amazing tiny little unit because it seems to have been built, like many structures here, on the model of the wooden house, with pillars and brackets, joints and sockets, though, in actuality it is constructed entirely out of sandstone.

Facing the Pachisi Court where Akbar is said to have played the board game of Pachisi with maids as human counters, is the most eye-catching structure in Fatehpur Sikri – the delicately-columned hall rising five storeys, called the Panch Mahal. The first two floors are of equal size while the next two are graded, and on top is a single kiosk or open pavilion.

Directly behind, on the south-western side is the huge well-protected harem mansion known as Jodha-bai’s Palace. This is main palace of the zenana or harem. Jodha-bai was Akbar’s Rajput queen. There is a screened pavilion by the northern wall called the Hawa Mahal, where the women could sit in seclusion enjoying the view and the cool bridge. To the west of
Jodha-bai’s Palace is an elaborately decorated palace that the local guides claim was the residence of Akbar’s adviser and confidant Raja Birbal. So this is the palace of Birbal. This is unlikely as no one outside the royal family would have been allowed to live within the palace enclosure. Going by the richness of design, the two apartments were probably occupied by Akbar’s senior queens, Ruqayya Begum and Salima Sultan Begum. What distinguishes this structure is the intricate maze of carving and the jharokhas, brackets and pilasters typical of Hindu architecture.

The city of Fatehpur Sikri is a complicated complex of palaces and courtyards, full of light and air, unlike any of the palaces of Europe where the climate necessitated closed cloisters. But, here, like everything Mughal, care was taken to see that every detail was designed to cultivate the senses: the warm red texture of the stone, elegant visual forms and shapes besides shimmering ponds filled with fragrant perfumes and flowers, while the sound of music forever echoed through the spaces.
**Paintings of Fatehpur Sikri**

**Plate no. 174  Mosque at Fatehpur Sikri, Near Agra, Oil on canvas by William Daniell**

**Description:** The whole picture is occupied by the arched entrance to the mosque, and the forecourt. The dome can be seen behind the main gate of mosque. On the right a large tree has been shown and many people standing or sitting in the forecourt.

**Plate no. 175  Front view of Buland Darvaza, Fatehpur Sikri, Watercolour on paper by Jaipur Artist**

**Description:** This is the beautiful painting of Buland Darvaza which was painted in 19th century. This painting gives the idea of the painter that how he copied its architecture which has a secular adaptation of temple and mosque patterns.
Description: The Buland Darvaza (or the high gateway), a colossal structure of breathtaking loftiness, is the main gate of the principal mosque in Fatehpur Sikri, which has been drawn in this painting. Another building is also shown in the left side of this painting. Many people are standing and sitting in the ground. This painting depicts the glory and the charismatic beauty of the fort.
Description: This painting shows the tomb of Sheikh Salim Chishti in Fatehpur Sikri. This Painting portrays the architectural drawing of the tomb as drawn in the company style. It seems that in his painting artist wants to capture all the beauty and glory of the tomb. In this picture the veranda, the lattices, the pillars and lintels with their arches – all shows the secular architectural taste of Akbar.

Description: Hodges painted the Buland Darvaza showing the huge walls of Fatehpur Sikri and it is surrounded with its ruins. This painting depicts the evening scene with beautiful colour scheme. An elephant is shown travelling down the fort in an artistic way.
**Description:** In this painting it seems that the magnetic and sophisticated beauty of the Buland Darvaza and fort is surrounded small mountains of mud and its steep sides plays the role of pathways for people. A bullock cart covering a wide portion of the painting mesmerises us about the distant past mode of transportation.
3.2.6 Chini Ka Rauza

Less than 1km north of Itmad-ud-daulah is Chini-ka-rauza, built in 1635 and reputed to be the mausoleum of Afzal Khan, a Persian poet and Shah Jahan's prime minister. Neglected and decaying, its soft brown stone is victim to the elements and is now crumbling away into the riverbank. Topped with an Afghan-style bulbous dome, the dull earth-coloured tomb is a far cry from Nur Jahan's delicate work, but is distinctive as Agra's sole Persian construction. Parts of the walls are still covered with the coloured enamel tiles (chini) that once enhanced the whole of the exterior and gave the tomb its name, while traces of paintings and Islamic calligraphy can still be made out on the high domed ceiling.

The main tomb building is very simple in plan and lacks architectural ornamentation. According to 1871-72 survey report, the monument originally enclosed by high walls, having gateways on North and South direction, two three storeyed octagonal towers and a ghat of stone masonry near the river bank, but now only the main Tomb building, in partially damaged state, has survived.

The main tomb is square in plan with 79 feet (8.48m) side. The central chamber is in octagonal plan having diameter of 27'10" (8.48m), with eight arched recesses. Out of these eight arched recesses, four are pentagonal arched which are close and rest of the four are square which provides openings on all four sides. There are four square chambers, one at every corner, which are interconnected with the side halls or porches on all four sides.

The upper part of the tomb contains an arched passage which is three feet (94 cm) wide and opens on all the four corners into four rooms just above the lower corner chambers and gives a double storeyed effect to the tomb
building. This passage was accessible by a stairway on the southern side which ultimately leads to terrace. The superstructure of the building includes a shallow dome which is crowned by inverted lotus and kalash finial, and pinnacles on all the four corners.

The monument was designed in such a way, that it may provide spaces for colour embellishments. Use of architectural ornamentation like chhajja, brackets and balconies were restricted to provide enough space for glazed tile decoration. The sides of central arch, on each side of the building contains inscription in blue coloured tiles which is bordered by stylized design in blue, yellow and green tiles. The spandrels of the arches are decorated with arabesque and floresque patterns, laid in blue and orange tiles. The shafts on sides of the arches contain zig-zag design in crimson, orange and white colour. Chevrons of the pinnacles are decorated with bands of blue tiles. The remaining spaces on each facade is divided into panels each having floral designs in variegated colours like blue, green, orange, vermillion etc..
Painting of Chini Ka Rouza

Plate no. 180 The China Roza, Watercolour on paper, Painted by: Sita Ram

Description: This painting painted by Sita Ram for Lord Hastings. Here by contrast the artist introduces a poetic atmospheric note into his view of the building; and although his record of it is earlier, the tomb appears in a state of decay. The painting gives the clear idea of artist’s characteristics like soft and loose brushwork and aerial perspective. Artist has used beautiful tone of blue colour in tomb and in the background to create a very calm and peaceful atmosphere.
**Description:** When the British took over Agra in 1803 the Chini-ka-Rauza was noted as a building of architectural merit, so it appears as a subject of ‘Company drawings’, done with great attention to detail by Indian artists for British patrons. The interest in detail is typical of the company school. This drawing gives the clear idea of beautiful tiles work which is bordered by stylized design. The spandrels of the arches are decorated with arabesque and flower patterns, which are beautifully shown in the painting.