Agra Fort - Study Notes

Agra Fort, Agra

Agra Fort is probably the biggest forts in India. The fort was under Rajputs, Mughals, Suris, Marathas, and British. It was redesigned by Mughal dynasty and in this period many structures were built inside the fort. The fort consists of many attractions like mosques, public and private halls, palaces, gardens, and different attractions. This study notes will let you know about the history of the fort along alongside the structures present inside the fort.

Audience

This study notes is made for the people who would like to know about the history of Agra Fort along with the interiors and architecture of the monument. This monument is visited by many tourists from India and abroad.

Prerequisites

Before entering the fort, the travelers must check that they are not carrying any edibles. Other than these, smoking isn’t permitted inside the fort. Mobile chargers, knives, pens, electronic things, wires, etc. are not allowed inside the complex however they can take camera with them. Travelers are also suggested to take an approved guide who can explain the different structures inside the fort.
Agra Fort - Overview

Agra Fort was worked by Raja Badal Singh and the fort was previously called Badalgarh Fort. Later on, Lodi dynasty captured the fort and after that the fort went under Mughal dynasty who redesigned the fort. The fort is developed in Agra and is around 3 km away from Taj Mahal.

The fort is developed with red sandstone which was brought from Rajasthan. History says that around 4,000 developers worked daily to finish the development which came to an end after eight years. Agra Fort is now listed under UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Visiting Hours

The fort is opened for the people from sunrise to sunset. The fort is opened on all seven days for the people.

Tickets

Travelers need to purchase tickets in order to visit the fort. For a foreign tourist, the cost is Rs. 550 while an Indian need to pay only Rs. 40 to visit the fort. There is no ticket for the children under fifteen years.

There is also a arrangement for foreign tourists that if they purchase Agra Development Authority (ADA) toll tax ticket for Rs. 500, there is no need to purchase other toll tax tickets and they can visit many monuments like Taj Mahal, Akbar’s Tomb, Fatehpur Sikri, Itmad-ud-Daulah Tomb on the same day. For the next day they will again have to by ADA tickets. No toll tax charge has to be paid on Fridays for any monument.
Agra Fort - Location

Agra Fort was a ruined fort called Badalgarh which was renovated by Akbar. Before him, Lodis also built many mosques and palaces inside the fort. The fort covers an area of 380,000 sq. ft. and is built on the banks of river Yamuna.

History of Agra

Agra is one of the most popular cities in India as well as abroad as it consists of many beautiful monuments like Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Akbar’s tomb, Chini ka Rauza and many others. People from various places in India and abroad come to visit the city.

Agra under Rajputs

Agra is a very old city. It is described in the epic of Mahabharata in which its name was Agrevana. History also says that the city was founded by Raja Badal Singh who was a Rajput king. He was the one who built Badalgarh fort which was renovated by Akbar. In the 11th century, Mahmud of Ghazni attacked Agra. At that time Jayapala was the king of Agra.

Agra under Lodis

Sikandar Lodi made Agra his capital in 1506 and after him his son Ibrahim Lodi ruled the city. Ibrahim Lodi was defeated by Babur in 1526 and Agra came into the hands of Mughals.

Agra under Mughals
Babur occupied the throne of Delhi and Agra. He lived in the palace of Ibrahim Lodi that was built in the fort. He built a baoli for storing water. Humayun was coronated as a king here but in 1540, he was defeated by Sher Shah Suri. Mughals again captured the fort in 1555 but Hemu, the chief minister of Adil Shah again won it back. After defeating Hemu, Akbar shifted his capital to Agra. After this, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb ruled from here. Though Jahangir used to live in Delhi and Kashmir but he visited Agra and lived in Agra Fort. After Aurungzeb, Mughal dynasty declined. During the time of Mughals, the city was named Akbarabad.

Agra under Suris

The Suris ruled Agra from 1540 to 1555. In 1540, Sher Shah Suri defeated Humayun, the Mughal Emperor. Sher Shah Suri built his tomb at Sasaram in Bihar. The tomb was built between 1540 and 1545. Sher Shah Suri died in 1545 and his son Adil Shah became the king. He was defeated by Humayun in 1555 but Hemu again captured the fort in 1556. Akbar defeated Hemu and recaptured the fort.

Agra under Marathas

Marathas captured the fort in the 18th century and named the city Agra. In 1761, they were defeated by Ahmad Shah Abdali but Mahadji Shinde again captured Agra in 1785. In 1803, the Marathas were defeated by the British.

Agra under British

After defeating the Marathas, Agra came under the control of British. In 1835, British made Agra their capital. During the mutiny of 1857, the British told that the revolt has reached Agra which was the reason of moving some of their troops to Delhi. Agra remained under the British till Independence.

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Agra Fort - How To Reach?

Agra is connected to many cities through road and rail transport. Agra has additionally got its domestic airport called as Agra Civil Enclave which is five kilometres far from the city.

By Air

Agra has its own airport which is straightforwardly connected with Delhi, Varanasi, and Khajuraho. Close by places connected by national and international airports are Delhi, Jaipur, Lucknow, and Gwalior. Many national and international flights arrive to and depart from these airports.

The distance of Agra from Delhi, Jaipur, Gwalior, and Lucknow are as per the following –

- Agra to Delhi – 203km
- Agra to Jaipur – 232km
- Agra to Lucknow – 363km
- Agra to Gwalior – 118km

Travelers can come to Agra from these cities through road or rail transport.

By Train

Agra has three main railway stations which are Agra Cantt, Agra Fort, and Raja Ki Mandi which are associated to all the major cities of India. Idgah and Agra City are two other railway stations however very few trains stop here. Many premium, superfast, mail and express trains go through these railway stations.
Premium trains like Rajdhani, Shatabdi, and Double-Decker express associates nearby as well as distant places to Agra.

By Road

Agra is associated with Delhi, Jaipur, Lucknow and other nearby cities by road. Travelers can either book taxis or take a bus to reach Agra.
The significant bus stands of Agra are –

- Idgah Bus Stand
- Taj Depot
- Ford Depot
- Inter State Bus Terminal

**Local Transport**

From railway station, bus stand, or airport, tourists can arrive Agra Fort through different modes of local transport like cycle rickshaw, auto rickshaw, local buses, and taxis.

There are additionally tourist packages provided by different tour operators for visiting other places in Agra.
Agra Fort - History

Agra Fort was built by Rajput king named Raja Badal Singh who named it Badalgarh Fort. Afterward, Lodi tradition built many palaces and mosques inside the fort. It was completely renovated during the Mughal tradition. The renovation was begun by Emperor Akbar. Then Jahangir and Shah Jahan built many different structures inside the fort.

Lodi Dynasty

After the attack of Mahmud of Ghazni, Sikandar Lodi made Agra his capital. His child Ibrahim Lodi also made Agra his capital. Ibrahim Lodi was defeated by Babur in the first battle of Panipat in 1526. The Lodi tradition built many palaces, wells and a mosque.

Fort under Mughal Dynasty

After defeating Ibrahim Lodi, the first Mughal emperor Babur stayed in the fort. Humayun was sent by his father Babur to Agra and he captured the fort and got a huge treasure which incorporated a big diamond. Humayun called the diamond as Kohinoor. This is the fort where Humayun was delegated as king. He was defeated by Sher Shah Suri in 1540 and the fort was under the Suris till 1555. Humayun defeated Adil Shah Suri son of Sher Shah Suri and again became the emperor.

Hemu captured Agra in 1556 and in the battle of Tughlaqabad. He defeated Tardi Beg Khan the pioneer of Mughal forces but he was defeated in the second battle of Panipat by Akbar.

Akbar then made Agra his capital and redesigned the fort which was destroyed. After Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan added many structures to the monument. Gardens, palaces, mosques and different structures were built in the fort. Shah Jahan was detained by his child Aurangzeb in the fort and he died there after eight years.

Post Mughal Period

After the decline of Mughal tradition, the fort was captured by Marathas who were later defeated by Ahmad Shah Abdali in the third battle of Panipat. A Maratha named Mahadji Shinde again captured the fort in 1785. Afterward, the British captured the fort and it was under them till independence.

Dimensions

The fort is built in a semi-round way covering an area of 94 acre. It is built in front of the Yamuna River. The walls of the fort are 70 feet high.

Monuments inside the Fort

Right now, there are more than two dozen monuments inside the fort though Akbar built around 5,000 monuments as indicated by Abul Fazl out of which most of them are ruined. The monuments built by Akbar have the architecture of Gujarat and Bengal. Shah Jahan has also built white marble palaces and to do this he destroyed some of the monuments. The remaining monuments in the fort are Delhi Gate, Akbari Gate, Bengali Mahal, and others.
Shah Jahan assembled three mosques inside the fort named Moti Masjid, Mina Masjid, and Nagina Masjid. Other than these, Shah Jahan additionally built several palaces. In order to give more security to the fort, Aurangzeb constructed barbicans around two gates.
There are four gates to enter the fort which are situated on four sides.

Khizri Gate

Khizri gate, also called as water gate, is in front of the river.

Amar Singh Gate

Amar Singh was known as Akbar Darwaza however it was renamed by Shah Jahan as Amar Singh Gate. Amar Singh was a person who killed Salabat Khan in front of Shah Jahan and afterward tried to jump with his horse. He failed to jump as the horse died while jumping and Amar Singh was killed. Shah Jahan was so appreciated by the bravery of Amar Singh that he renamed the Akbar Darwaza as Amar Singh Darwaza.

The gate has a drawbridge over the canal. On both sides of the gate, there are octagonal towers one on each side. The gate also has Naubat Khana which has pillared structures around it. The bastions on the gate are finished off with chhatris alongside modified lotus.
Delhi Gate

Akbar constructed the Delhi Gate between 1568 and 1569. Delhi Gate is on the western side and is the most modern in comparison to other gates. This was the main entrance during the time of Akbar so for the security reason, a draw bridge was made to cross the channel. The draw bridge can turn to 90 degree between outer and inner gates. There were sharp curves at the entrance to prevent invasions.

Hathi Pol is the inner gateway having one stone elephant on each side for security. The fort has double ramparts with roundabout bastions which are placed at regular intervals. Other than these trap points, ramps were also made for preventing invasion. The bastions of the gate are also extremely high.

Ghazni Gate

Ghazni Gate belonged to the tomb of Mahmud Ghaznavi. The tomb stands at Ghazni which was brought by the British in 1842. Around then the governor general was Ellenborough who told that this gate belonged to Somnath temple as it was built with sandalwood. But it was a false claim made by the governor to win the hearts of Indian people.

There was no similarity of Indian design in the gate. An Arabic script on top of the gate also proves that the gate does not belong to Somnath. The dimensions of the gate is 16.5 by 13.5 feet and weight is around half a ton. It was not brought to Somnath temple and also it has no relationship with Mughal design.
Agra Fort - Palaces

Many palaces were built by the kings of Lodi and Mughal dynasty. Most of them have been ruined and few are left. The description of some of them is as follows –

Sheesh Mahal

Sheesh Mahal or glass palace was built in 1631 by Shah Jahan below Diwan-e-Khas. The palace is extra thick walled as it is said that it was used for taking baths. Mirrors have been fixed on the walls which enhances the beauty of the palace. As many numbers of mirrors have been placed in the walls and ceiling, the palace is called Sheesh mahal. The artificial lights inside the palace were used to illuminate it.

There are two chambers in the palace which have two passages. The chambers are connected with a broad arch that is placed in the center. Each chamber has a marble tank and has fountains for taking bath. The doors of the chambers are also built with marble in order to take steam bath. There are two inlets for water and two niches for lightening the candles.

Akbari Mahal

Akbari mahal is ruined now but legends say that it was a big palace built between 1565 and 1569. The palace was built between Jahangiri Mahal and Musamman Burj. It had a large courtyard and many rooms for accommodation were built around it. Some rooms can still be seen and tourists can enter them through the gate which was designed in such a way that women can be completely veiled and secured.
There were two halls in the palace out of which one hall has three openings towards the river. The palace has Bengali Burj having a large hall with a dome. Near the burj, there is Akbari Baoli to provide water to the rooms surrounding it. The palace was built with red sandstone with flat ceilings and brackets.

Jahangiri Mahal

Jahangiri Mahal was built between 1565 and 1569 AD. The arched portal of the palace has two windows along with towers on both sides. The palace includes rooms, corridors, verandas and many other structures which surrounded a courtyard. The entrance hall had **tibara dalans** and side rooms. It is said that the Rajput wives of Akbar lived in the palace. After that, the palace was used by **Nur Jahan**, the wife of Jahangir.

The palace also had a Peacock Hall or Mayura Mandapa which was a red sandstone apartment. The peacock hall had a courtyard and brackets each having a peacock with a serpent in its beak. The building includes chhajjas, brackets, and screens which enhances the beauty of the building.
Jahangir’s Hauz

Jahangir’s Hauz was constructed by Jahangir in 1610. The height of the tank is 5 feet while the diameter is 8 feet. The circumference of the rim is 25 feet. The tank was movable and so it could be used inside the palace and during the camping period. There is a Persian inscription which tells that the tank was built in 1610 by Jahangir.
Khas Mahal

Shah Jahan built the Khas Mahal between 1631 and 1640. It is also known as Aramgah-i-Muqaddar and was built between the Yamuna River and the Anguri Bagh. The pavilions of the palace were made up of white marbles.

Along with this, there is a tank in front of the palace which had fountains. The main hall of the palace, called baradari, was connected to the living rooms. The ceilings were beautifully carved while the walls had the pictures of the Mughal emperors.

Anguri Bagh

Garden of grapes or Anguri Bagh was built in 1637 by Shah Jahan. It was built in front of Khas Mahal. The garden was divided into compartments with a fountain in the center. Good quality of grapes were grown in the garden. The garden was surrounded by apartments for royal ladies.
Bengali Mahal

Bengali Mahal was built by Akbar having curved chhajas or Banglaur chhajjas. Two-storeyed underground apartments can be found under the table. On the northern side of this palace, Shah Jahan made other palaces which divided the Bengali palace in two parts called Akbari Mahal and Jahangiri Mahal.

Shah Jahani Mahal

Shah Jahani Mahal is situated between Jahangiri Mahal and Khas Mahal. The palace consists of a large hall surrounded by living rooms. The palace was built with red sandstone plastered with a thick white plaster. The walls are painted with a colourful design of flowers. There is a marble dalan with five arches that are cusped. The double pillars support the arches which are externally protected by a chhajja.

Musamman Burj

Musamman Burj, also known as Saman Burj and Shah Burj, is a tower in octagon shape. The structure was built near Diwan-e-Khas and it was built by Shah Jahan. During the reign of Akbar, he built a palace which was demolished by Jahangir to build other buildings. Then Shah Jahan chose this place to build Musamman Burj for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal. The building was built between 1631 and 1640.
The dome of the building is crowned with copper while the floor resembled the board of a game called **pachchisi** though nobody played the game here. It was made only to cover the drains. There is a beautiful window or **jharokha** made up of marble. Along with it a chhajja was there on the support of brackets.
Diwan-e-Aam

The Diwan-e-Aam or the house of crowd was worked by Shah Jahan between 1631 and 1640. The lobby measures 201 feet by 67 feet. The gateways of the corridor are made of red sandstone. The lobby is divided into three aisles. The front part of the hall has nine arches. The red sandstone building is plastered with white plaster to make it look like marble building. The emperor used to address the people from a raised rectangular chamber which is additionally made perfectly.

There is a throne room called Takht-i-Murassa which is worked with marble. The royal women could see the ceremonies through the windows located on left and right sides of the chamber. There was a baithak below the chamber for the wazir to sit on it.

Diwan-e-Khas

Diwan-e-Khas or hall of private crowd was a corridor in which the emperor dealt with ambassadors, kings, and other royal people of other kingdoms. Diwan-e-Khas was manufactured in 1635 with two lobbies out of which the inner hall was called Tambi Khana.

Diwan-e-Khas or lobby of private crowd was a corridor in which the head managed envoys, rulers, and other illustrious individuals of different realms. Diwan-e-Khas was manufactured in 1635 with two lobbies out of which the inward corridor was called Tambi Khana.
The ceiling of the hall is covered with leaves made up of gold and silver to resemble sun’s rays. The borders of the chambers are decorated on floral patterns while the center portion is designed with different types of carvings.
Agra Fort - Mosques

Mina Masjid

Mina Masjid was worked by Shah Jahan for himself and the royal ladies to offer prayers. This was the reason that the mosque was built close to the palaces of women. The mosque is surrounded with high dividers and it has a very simple development. There is a prayer chamber with a mihrab facing west. There are tiles made up of marbles and brackets to support chhajja.

Moti Masjid

Moti Masjid was worked by Shah Jahan between 1648 and 1654. The mosque is built near Diwan-e-Aam. The interior of the mosque is built by marble while the exterior is made up of bricks. Due to the usage of pearly white marble, the mosque came to be known as moti masjid or pearl mosque. The direction of the prayer chamber is in the west as Muslims face Mecca while praying to god.

A porch with twelve pillars and an arch covers the three sides of the mosque. The beautiful main gate has curves with three chhatris. The mosque has three domes whose parapets have been designed according to the Hindu design. Ladies prayer corridors are built on either side of the main prayer hall and have marble screens.

Nagina Masjid

Nagina Masjid was worked by Shah Jahan close by Moti Masjid. The mosque was worked between 1631 and 1640AD. The entire mosque is worked with marble and has a very simple architecture. There are three domes on top of the prayer chamber.
There is a mihrab in the prayer chamber that faces the direction of the Holy Kaaba in Mecca. There are three domes out of which the central one is bigger than the other two.
Other than visiting Agra Fort, travelers can also visit the places close by which are Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri, and Sikandra.

**Taj Mahal**

Taj Mahal was built by Shah Jahan in the memory of his adored spouse Mumtaz Mahal. This monument is one of the seven wonders of the world and is worked from white marble. Alongside marble, red sandstone is additionally used to build some structures like mosque, entrance gates and others. Taj Mahal is around 7km from Agra Fort.

**Fatehpur Sikri**

Fatehpur Sikri was constructed by Akbar and its development was started in 1564. While being childless, he went to Saint Sheikh Salim Chishti and due to his blessings, Akbar became the father of a male kid.
Fatehpur Sikri was built in the commemoration of this occasion. Afterward, Akbar abandoned the city due to water lack and different events. The places to visit here are Salim Chishti tomb, Buland Darwaza, Panch Mahal, Jodha bai Mahal, and different structures. Fatehpur Sikri is around 38 km from Agra fort.

**Sikandra**

Akbar’s tomb was built by Akbar in Sikandra. The development of the building was started by Akbar and finished by Jahangir.

The tomb has lawns and curved doors. Sikandra is around 13km from Agra fort.
The end...