

Shah Jahan Height of Mughal Power (1628–1658)

Accession and Early Challenges

Shah Jahan became the emperor in **1628** after winning a **war of succession** against his brothers. In the beginning of his reign, he faced **revolts** from Afghan chiefs and some nobles but he crushed them quickly.

He continued the **administrative systems** of Akbar and Jahangir but made the emperor's power stronger.

He rewarded loyal supporters and punished enemies to build a strong and **stable rule**.

His wife **Mumtaz Mahal** inspired much of his cultural and architectural work.

He focused on making the empire **peaceful, rich, and well-organized** rather than rushing into wars.

Expansion and Military Campaigns

Shah Jahan expanded the empire in the **Deccan** (South India). He captured **Ahmadnagar** and brought **Bijapur** and **Golconda** under Mughal influence through diplomacy and pressure.

In the **northwest**, he tried to control **Balkh and Badakhshan**, but strong local resistance forced him to retreat.

He fought the **Portuguese** to secure Mughal trade on the sea routes.

The Mughal Empire lost **Kandahar** to Persia during his rule and could not take it back.

After these campaigns, Shah Jahan focused more on **internal prosperity** and stability than on risky expansion.

His military was well-organized with artillery, cavalry, and experienced generals, keeping the empire safe.

Administration and Economy

Shah Jahan kept Akbar's **Mansabdari System** but made it **tighter and more controlled** by the emperor.

He improved **revenue collection** and made sure taxes were fair and strictly monitored.

He promoted **agriculture** by protecting peasants and keeping the land revenue system balanced.

He built **roads, bridges, and safe trade routes**, helping merchants and goods move easily.

Ports such as **Surat** flourished, bringing in wealth from trade with **Europe and Asia**.

He kept an eye on nobles to stop corruption and **prevent rebellion**.

His fair administration and peaceful policies made the empire **rich and stable**.

Cultural Achievements and Architecture

Shah Jahan is called the “**Master Builder**” of the Mughal Empire.

He built the world-famous **Taj Mahal** in memory of his wife **Mumtaz Mahal** — a symbol of love and Mughal art.

He also built the **Red Fort** and **Jama Masjid** in Delhi, showing Mughal power and beauty.

He created beautiful gardens like the **Shalimar Gardens** in **Lahore** and other cities.

His court supported **Persian art, calligraphy, jewelry, and fine crafts**.

He encouraged **music, poetry, and literature**, making his court a cultural center.

His reign is called the **golden age of Mughal art and architecture**.

Decline and Legacy

In his later years, Shah Jahan faced a **war of succession** among his sons.

His son **Aurangzeb** defeated his brothers, took the throne, and **imprisoned Shah Jahan** in Agra Fort until he died in **1666**.

His **wars and massive building projects** (like the Taj Mahal and Red Fort) drained the empire's money.

Losing **Kandahar** weakened the Mughal Empire's image of military strength.

Even though financial problems started, his reign left the empire **politically strong and culturally rich**.

The **beauty of cities, art, and architecture** reached their peak under him.

He is remembered for making the **Mughal Empire wealthy, elegant, and architecturally glorious**.