

Effects of the Mughal Empire on India

Written by W.J.Pais

[Indus River](#)

[3]

In [1526](#), [Babur](#) defeated [Shah Rukh](#) the [Delhi Sultan](#), [Battle of Panipat](#). To secure his rule

[Rajput](#)

[Rana Sanga](#)

[Chittor](#)

[battle of Khanwa](#)

[4]

The Mughal Empire

←
[1526](#) □ →

[1857](#)

→



[Flag](#)

[Capital](#)

[Lahore](#) ,

[Delhi](#) ,

[Agra](#)

[Language\(s\)](#)

[Persian](#)

(initially also [Chagatai](#) ;

[Urdu](#)

[Government](#)

[Monarchy](#)

[Emperor](#)

- [1526-1530](#)

[Babur](#)

- [1530-1539](#) and after restoration [Humayun](#) [1555-1556](#)

- [1556-1605](#)

[Akbar](#)

- [1605-1627](#)

[Jahangir](#)

- [1628-1658](#)

[Shah Jahan](#)

- [1659-1707](#)

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Later Emperors = 1707-1857

Aurangzeb

History

- Established April 21 , 1526

- Ended September 21 , 1857

Area

3,000,000 km² (1,158,306 sq mi)

Population

- 1700 est. 150,000,000

Currency

Rupee

Babur's son Humayun succeeded him in 1530 but suffered major reversals at the hands of the Pashtun Sher Shah Suri and effectively lost most of the fledgling empire before it could grow beyond a minor regional state. From 1540

onwards Humayun became a ruler in exile, reaching the Court of

Safavid

ruler in

1542

while his forces still controlled some fortresses and small regions. But when the Afghans fell into disarray with the death of Sher Shah Suri, Humayun returned with a mixed army, raised more troops and managed to reconquer Delhi in

1555

His son Akbar was an infant when Humayun decided to cross the rough terrain of Makran with his wife, and so was left behind to keep him from the rigours of the long journey. Since he did not go to Persia with his parents, he was eventually transported from the

Rajput

fortress of Umarkot in

Sind

where he was born to be raised for a time by his uncle Askari in the rugged country of Afghanistan. There he became an excellent outdoors man, horseman, hunter and learned the arts of the warrior.

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Within a few months after the resurgent Humayun conquered the central plateau around Delhi, he was killed in an accident, leaving an unsettled realm still involved in war. Akbar (1556 to [1605](#))

succeeded his father on

[14 February](#)

1556, while in the midst of a war against

[Sikandar Shah Suri](#)

for the reclamation of the Mughal throne. Thus, he was thrust onto the throne and soon recorded his first victory at the age of 13 or 14, and the rump remnant began to grow, then it grew considerably, so that he became called Akbar, as he was a wise ruler, set fair but steep taxes, he investigated the production in a certain area and the inhabitants were taxed accordingly 1/3 of the agricultural produce. He also set up an efficient bureaucracy and was tolerant of religious differences which softened the resistance by the conquered.

[Jahangir](#), the son of Mughal Emperor Akbar and [Rajput](#) princess [Mariam-uz-Zamani](#),

ruled the empire from

[1605](#)

–

[1627](#)

. In October 1627,

[Shah Jahan](#)

, the son of Mughal Emperor Jahangir and Rajput

[princess Manmati](#)

, succeeded to the throne, where he inherited a vast and rich empire in

[India](#)

; and at mid-century this was perhaps the greatest empire in the world. Shah Jahan commissioned the famous

[Taj Mahal](#)

(

[1630](#)

–

[1653](#)

) in

[Agra](#)

as a tomb for his wife

[Mumtaz Mahal](#)

, who died giving birth to their 14th child. By 1700 the empire reached its peak with major parts of present day India, except for the North eastern states, the

[Sikh](#)

lands in Punjab, the lands of the

[Marathas](#)

, areas in the south and most of Afganistan under its domain, under the leadership of

[Aurangzeb Alamgir](#)

. Aurangzeb was the last of what are now referred to as the Great Mughal kings.

Religion

After the [invasion](#) of Persia by the [Mongol Empire](#), a regional Turko-Persio-Mongol dynasty formed. Just as eastern Mongol dynasties inter-married with locals and adopted the local religion of [Buddhism](#) and the [Chinese culture](#)

, this group adopted the local religion of

[Islam](#)

and the

[Persian culture](#)

. The first Mughal King, Babur, established the Mughal dynasty in regions spanning parts of present-day

[Pakistan](#)

and

[India](#)

. Upon invading this region, the Mughals inter-married with local royalty once again, creating a dynasty of combined

[Turko-Persian](#)

, and

[Mongol](#)

background. King Babur did this to create peace among the different religions in the region. Despite preaching Islamic values himself, Babur focused on setting a good example for the Mughal Dynasty by emphasizing religious tolerance.

The language of the court was [Persian](#). The language spoken was [Urdūn](#), which today has advanced into

[Urdu](#)

. Urdu originated from Persio-Arabic formation, and took on various characteristics of Persian,

[Chagatai](#)

, and

[Arabic](#)

. Today, Urdu is the National Language of Pakistan and is spoken by a small percentage of Indian

[Muslims](#)

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The dynasty remained unstable until the reign of [Akbar](#), who was of liberal disposition and intimately acquainted, since birth, with the mores and traditions of Islam in the Indian sub-continent. Under Akbar's rule, the court abolished the

[jizya](#)

(minor tax on non-Muslims comparable with

[zakat](#)

for Muslims) and abandoned use of the muslim

[lunar calendar](#)

in favour of a

[solar calendar](#)

. One of Akbar's most unusual ideas regarding religion was

[Din-i-Ilahi](#)

(Faith of God), which was an eclectic mix of

[Islam](#)

,
[Zoroastrianism](#)

,
[Jainism](#)

and

[Christianity](#)

. It was proclaimed the state religion until his death. These actions however met with stiff opposition from the muslim clergy, especially the

[Sufi](#)

Shaykh Alf Sani

[Ahmad Sirhindi](#)

. Akbar is remembered as tolerant, at least by the standards of the day: only one major massacre was recorded during his long reign (1556–1605), when he ordered most of the captured inhabitants of a fort be slain on

[February 24](#)

,
[1568](#)

, after the battle for Chitor. Akbar's acceptance of other religions and toleration of their public worship, his abolition of poll-tax on non-Muslims, and his interest in other faiths show an attitude of considerable religious tolerance, which, in the minds of his orthodox Muslim opponents, was tantamount to

[apostasy](#)

. He made the formal declaration of his own infallibility in all matters of religious doctrine, promulgated a new creed, and adopted Hindu and Zoroastrian festivals and practices.

It is important to remember that the Mughals, while originally Sunnis from Afghanistan,

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converted to Shia as a pre-condition for the help extended by the Persian Emperor to Humayun to regain his Kingdom lost to Sher Shah. See [Humayun Refuge in Persia](#). The Shah Tahmasp, unlike Humayun's own family, actually welcomed the Mughal, and treated him as an emperor of equal stature. Infact Humayun did not even meet the Shah until July, some six months after his arrival in Persia. After a lengthy journey from

[Herat](#)

the two met in

[Qazvin](#)

where a large feast and parties were held for the event. The meeting of the two monarchs is depicted in a famous wall-painting in the

[Chehel Sotoun](#)

(Forty Columns) palace in

[Esfahan](#)

. It is here that the Shah urged that Humayun convert from Sunni to Shia Islam, hinting that this would be the price of his support, and eventually and reluctantly Humayun did so, much to the disapproval of his biographer Jauhar. With this outward acceptance of Shi'ism the Shah was prepared to offer Humayun more substantial support. When Humayun's brother, Kamran, offered to cede Kandahar to the Persians in exchange for Humayun, dead or alive, the Shah refused. Instead the Shah threw a party for Humayun, with three hundred tents, an imperial Persian carpet, 12 musical bands and "meat of all kinds". Here the Shah announced that all this, and 12,000 choice cavalry were his to lead an attack on his brother Kamran. All that Shah asked for was that, if Humayun's forces were victorious, Kandahar would be his.

The succeeding Emperor, Akbar kept true to his father's converted faith and indeed it is during his time that observance of Shia festivals took a regular place in the state calendar. The emperor Jahangir was also a religious moderate. His mother being Hindu and his father setting up an independent faith-of-the-court ('Din-i-Ilahi') and the influence of his two Hindu queens (the Maharani Maanbai and Maharani Jagat) kept religious moderation as a center-piece of state policy which was extended under the emperor Khusrau. Religious orthodoxy would only play an important role during the reign of Aurangzeb Ālamgīr, a devout Muslim. Aurangzeb considered himself Sunni and state persecution of Shias as well as non-Muslims reached a zenith under his reign. The religious tyranny unleashed by Aurangzeb to sanctify his warlust led to wars with the Hindu Rajputs, Marathas as well as Muslim kingdoms of Bijapur and Hyderabad and the complete subjugation of the Lucknow Nawabs. This last of the Great Mughals retracted most of the tolerant policies of his forbears. Under his reign the empire reached its greatest extent in terms of territorial gain and economic strength.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

Economy

The Mughals used the [mansabdar](#) system to generate land revenue. The emperor would grant revenue rights to a *mansabdar* in exchange for promises of soldiers in wartime. The greater the size of the land the emperor granted, the greater the number of soldiers the *mansabdar* had to promise. The *mansab* was both revocable and non-hereditary; this gave the centre a fairly large degree of control over the *mansabdars*.

□ Establishment and reign of Babur

Main article: [Babur](#)

In the early [16th century](#), Muslim armies consisting of Mongol, Turkic, Persian, and [Afghan](#) warriors invaded India under the leadership of the Timurid prince Zahir-ud-Din-Muhammad Babur. Babur was the great-grandson of

[Central Asian](#)

conqueror Timur-e Lang (Timur the Lame, from which the Western name Tamerlane is derived), who had invaded India in

[1398](#)

before retiring to

[Samarkand](#)

. Timur himself claimed descent from the Mongol ruler,

[Genghis Khan](#)

. Babur was driven from Samarkand by the Uzbeks and initially established his rule in

[Kabul](#)

in

[1504](#)

. Later, taking advantage of internal discontent in the

[Delhi sultanate](#)

under

[Ibrahim Lodi](#)

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, and following an invitation from [Daulat Khan Lodhi](#) (governor of Punjab) and [Alam Khan](#) (uncle of the Sultan), Babur invaded India in [1526](#).

Babur, a seasoned military commander, entered India in 1526 with his well-trained veteran army of 12,000 to meet the sultan's huge but unwieldy and disunited force of more than 100,000 men. Babur defeated the Lodhi sultan decisively at the [First Battle of Panipat](#). Employing

[firearms](#)

, gun carts, movable

[artillery](#)

, superior cavalry tactics, and the highly regarded Mughal composite bow, a weapon even more powerful than the English longbow of the same period, Babur achieved a resounding victory and the Sultan was killed. A year later (

[1527](#)

) he decisively defeated, at the

[Battle of Khanwa](#)

, a Rajput confederacy led by

[Rana Sanga](#)

of Chittor. A third major battle was fought in 1529 at Gogra, where Babur routed the joint forces of Afghans and the sultan of

[Bengal](#)

. Babur died in 1530 in Agra before he could consolidate his military gains. During his short five-year reign, Babur took considerable interest in erecting buildings, though few have survived. He left behind as his chief legacy a set of descendants who would fulfil his dream of establishing an Islamic empire in the Indian subcontinent.

Successors

Babur's will to Humayun

According to the document available in the State Library of Bhopal, Babur left the following will to Humayun: [[citation needed](#)]

"My son take note of the following: do not harbor religious prejudice in your heart. You should dispense justice while taking note of the people's religious sensitivities, and rites. Avoid

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slaughtering cows in order that you could gain a place in the heart of natives. This will take you nearer to the people.

"Do not demolish or damage places of worship of any faith and dispense full justice to all, to ensure peace in the country. Islam can better be preached by the sword of love and affection, rather than the sword of tyranny and persecution. Avoid the differences between the Shias and Sunnis. Look at the various characteristics of your people just as characteristics of various seasons."

[[edit](#)] Humayun

Main article: [Humayun](#)

When Babur died, his son Humayun (1530–1556) inherited a difficult task. He was pressed from all sides by a reassertion of Afghan claims to the Delhi throne and by disputes over his own succession. Driven into [Sindh](#) by the armies of [Sher Shah Suri](#), in [1540](#) he fled to the [Rajput](#)

Kingdom of

[Umarkot](#)

then to Persia, where he spent nearly ten years as an embarrassed guest of the

[Safavid](#)

court of

[Shah Tahmasp](#)

. During Sher Shah's reign, an imperial unification and administrative framework were established; this would be further developed by Akbar later in the century. In addition, the tomb of Sher Shah Suri is an architectural masterpiece that was to have a profound impact on the evolution of Indo-Islamic funerary architecture. In

[1545](#)

, Humayun gained a foothold in Kabul with Safavid assistance and reasserted his Indian claims, a task facilitated by the weakening of Afghan power in the area after the death of Sher Shah Suri in May 1545. He took control of Delhi in

[1555](#)

, but died within six months of his return, from a fall down the steps of his library.

[

[citation needed](#)

]

His tomb at Delhi represents an outstanding landmark in the development and refinement of the Mughal style. It was designed in

[1564](#)

, eight years after his death, as a mark of devotion by his widow,

[Hamida Banu Begum](#)

Akbar

Humayun's untimely death in 1556 left the task of conquest and imperial consolidation to his thirteen-year-old son, [Jalal-ud-Din Akbar](#) (r.1556– [1605](#)). Following a decisive military victory at the [Second Battle of Panipat](#) in 1556, the regent [Bairam Khan](#) pursued a vigorous policy of expansion on Akbar's behalf. As soon as Akbar came of age, he began to free himself from the influences of overbearing ministers, court factions, and harem intrigues, and demonstrated his own capacity for judgment and leadership. A workaholic who seldom slept more than three hours a night, he personally oversaw the implementation of his administrative policies, which were to form the backbone of the Mughal Empire for more than 200 years. With the aide of his legendary [Navaratnas](#), he continued to conquer, annex, and consolidate a far-flung territory bounded by [Kabul](#) in the northwest, [Kashmir](#) in the north, [Bengal](#) in the east, and beyond the [Narmada River](#) in central India.

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[Akbar](#) [Jodhabai](#) [Mariam-uz-Zamani](#) [Rajput](#) [Deepavali](#) [jizya](#)

An astute ruler who genuinely appreciated the challenges of administering so vast an empire, Akbar introduced a policy of reconciliation and assimilation of Hindus (including [Jodhabai](#) , later renamed

[Mariam-uz-Zamani](#)

[
[citation needed](#)
]

Begum, the Hindu

[Rajput](#)

mother of his son and heir, Jahangir), who represented the majority of the population. He recruited and rewarded Hindu chiefs with the highest ranks in government; encouraged intermarriages between Mughal and

[Rajput](#)

aristocracy; allowed new temples to be built; personally participated in celebrating Hindu festivals such as

[Deepavali](#)

(or Diwali), the festival of lights; and abolished the

[jizya](#)

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(poll tax) imposed on non-Muslims. Akbar came up with his own theory of "rulership as a divine illumination," enshrined in his new religion

[Din-i-Ilahi](#)

(Divine Faith), incorporating the principle of acceptance of all religions and sects. He encouraged widow re-marriage, discouraged child marriage, outlawed the practice of [sati](#)

[
[citation needed](#)

] and persuaded Delhi merchants to set up special market days for women, who otherwise were secluded at home.

By the end of Akbar's reign, the Mughal Empire extended throughout [north India](#) and south of the [Narmad](#) river.

Notable exceptions were

[Gondwana](#)

in central India, which paid tribute to the Mughals,

[Assam](#)

in the northeast, and large parts of the

[Deccan](#)

. The area south of the

[Godavari](#)

river remained entirely out of the ambit of the Mughals. In

[1600](#)

, Akbar's empire had a revenue of £17.5 million. By comparison, in

[1800](#)

, the entire treasury of

[Great Britain](#)

totalled £16 million.

Akbar's empire supported vibrant intellectual and cultural life. The large imperial library included books in [Hindi](#), [Persian](#), [Greek](#), [Kashmiri](#), [English](#), and [Arabic](#), such as the [Shahn](#) [ameh](#),

[Bhagavata Purana](#)

and the

[Bible](#)

. Akbar regularly sponsored debates and dialogues among religious and intellectual figures with differing views, and he welcomed

[Jesuit](#)

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missionaries from

[Goa](#)

to his court. Akbar directed the creation of the

[Hamzanama](#)

, an artistic masterpiece that included 1400 large paintings. Architecture flourished during his reign. One of his first major building projects was the construction of a huge fort at Agra. The massive sandstone ramparts of the Red Fort are another impressive achievement. The most ambitious architectural exercise of Akbar, and one of the most glorious examples of Indo-Islamic architecture, was the creation of an entirely new capital city at Fatehpur Sikri.

Jahangir

After the [death of Akbar](#) in [1605](#), his son [Salim](#), as [Emperor Jahangir](#), ascended the throne.

[Kashmir](#)

The [Hiran Minar](#) located at [Sikri](#), was a tribute to Jahangir's favourite antelope.

Mughal rule under Jahangir (1605–[27](#)) and [Shah Jahan](#) ([1628](#) – [58](#)) was noted for political stability, brisk economic activity, beautiful paintings, and monumental buildings.

Jahangir's wife

[Nur](#)

[Jahan](#)

(Light of the World), emerged as the most powerful individual in the court besides the emperor. As a result, Persian poets, artists, scholars, and officers — including her own family members — lured by the Mughal court's brilliance and luxury, found asylum in India. However, the number of unproductive officers mushroomed in the state bureaucracies, as did corruption, while the excessive Persian representation upset the delicate balance of impartiality at the court.

The reign of Jahangir was also known for religious persecution. He severely persecuted the [Jains](#)

and destroyed

[Hindu](#)

However, Shah Jahan's reign is remembered more for monumental architectural achievements than anything else. The single most important architectural change was the use of marble instead of sandstone. He demolished the austere sandstone structures of Akbar in the Red Fort and replaced them with marble buildings such as the Diwan-i-Am (hall of public audience), the Diwan-i-Khas (hall of private audience), and the Moti Masjid (Pearl Mosque). The tomb of Itmiad-ud-Daula, the grandfather of his queen, [Mumtaz Mahal](#), was also constructed on the opposite bank of the

[Jamuna](#)

or Yamuna. In

[1638](#)

he began to lay out the city of Shahjahanabad beside the Jamuna river further North in Delhi. The Red Fort at Delhi represents the pinnacle of centuries of experience in the construction of palace-forts. Outside the fort, he built the Jama Masjid, the largest mosque in India. However, it is for the Taj Mahal, which he built as a memorial to his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, that he is most often remembered.

Shah Jahan's extravagant architectural indulgence had a heavy price. The peasants had been impoverished by heavy taxes and by the time his son Aurangzeb ascended the throne, the empire was in a state of insolvency. As a result, opportunities for grand architectural projects were severely limited. This is most easily seen at the Bibi-ki-Maqbara, the tomb of Aurangzeb's wife, built in [1678](#). Though the design was inspired by the Taj Mahal, it is half its size, the proportions compressed and the detail clumsily executed.

The Taj Mahal thus symbolizes both Mughal artistic achievement and excessive financial expenditures at a time when resources were shrinking. The economic positions of peasants and artisans did not improve because the administration failed to produce any lasting change in the existing social structure. There was no incentive for the revenue officials, whose concerns were primarily personal or familial gain, to generate resources independent of what was received from the Hindu zamindars and village leaders, who, due to self-interest and local dominance, did not hand over the entirety of the tax revenues to the imperial treasury. In their ever-greater dependence on land revenue, the Mughals unwittingly nurtured forces that eventually led to the break-up of their empire.

The Reign of Aurangzeb and the decline of the empire

The last [of the great Mughal emperors](#). During [his fifty-year reign](#), the empire reached [its greatest extent](#) with

[ajputs](#)

[Rajasthan](#)

[Malwa](#)

[Bundelkhand](#)

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[Marathas](#)

[Maharashtra](#)

[Ahoms](#)

[1700s](#)

[Banda Bahadur](#)

[Guru Gobind Singh](#)

One of the thirteen [Gates to the Alanya](#) actually built by Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and named

But most decisively the series of wars against the [Pashtuns](#) in Afghanistan weakened the very foundation upon which Moghul military rested. The Pashtuns formed the backbone of the Mughal army and were some of the most hardened troops. The antagonism showed towards the erstwhile Mughal General [Khusrau Khan Khattak](#), for one, seriously undermined the Mughal military apparatus.

Aurangzeb made his religion an important part of his reign. However, that brought about some resentment. For instance, the *jiziyah* tax which non-Muslims had to pay was re-introduced; Muslims had a different form of taxation, the *zakat*. Non-Muslims were not required to pay the tax before that. In this climate, contenders for the Mughal throne were many, and the reigns of Aurangzeb's successors were short-lived and filled with strife. The Mughal Empire experienced dramatic reverses as regional [nawabs](#) or governors broke away and founded independent kingdoms such as the Marathas to the southwest and the Sikhs in the northwest. In the [war of 27 years](#) from

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[1681](#)

to

[1707](#)

, the Mughals suffered several heavy defeats at the hands of the Marathas. In the early 1700s the Sikhs became increasingly militant in an attempt to fight the oppressive Mughal rule. They had to make peace with the Maratha armies.

[Nader Shah](#)

defeated the Mughal army at the huge

[Battle of Karnal](#)

in February,

[1739](#)

. After this victory, Nader captured and sacked Delhi, carrying away many treasures, including the

[Peacock Throne](#)

[6]

In 1761, Delhi was raided by

[Ahmed Shah Abdali](#)

after the

[Third battle of Panipat](#)

The decline of the Mughal Empire has been ascribed to several reasons. Some historians such as [Irfan Habib](#) have described the decline of the Mughal Empire in terms of class struggle. [7] Habib proposed that excessive taxation and repression of peasants created a discontented class that either rebelled itself or supported rebellions by other classes and states. Athar Ali proposed a theory of a "jagirdari crisis." According to this theory, the influx of a large number of new Deccan nobles into the Mughal nobility during the reign of Aurangzeb created a shortage of agricultural crown land meant to be allotted, and destroyed the crown lands altogether. [8] Other theories put weight on the devious role played by the

[Saeed brothers](#)

in destabilizing the Mughal throne and auctioning the agricultural crown lands for revenue extraction.

Ibrahim Lodhi (died April 21, 1526) was the last ruler of the Delhi Sultanate. He was an Afghan (specifically of the Ghilzai tribe of Pashtuns) who ruled over much of India from 1517-1526, when he was defeated by the Mughals, who established a new dynasty that would last some three centuries.

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Ibrahim attained the throne upon the death of his father, Sikandar Lodhi, but was not blessed with the same ruling capability. He faced a number of rebellions. Rana Sanga extended his empire right up to western UP and threatened to attack Agra. There was rebellion in the east also. He also displeased the nobility when he replaced old and senior commanders by younger ones who were loyal to him. He was feared and loathed by his subjects. His Afghan nobility eventually invited Babur of Kabul to invade India.

Ibrahim died in the Battle of Panipat, where Babur's superior fighters and the desertion of many of Lodhi's soldiers led to his downfall, despite superior troop numbers.

The **first battle of Panipat** took place in northern India, and marked the beginning of the Mughal Empire. This was one of the earliest battles involving gunpowder firearms and field artillery.

In [1526](#), the forces of Zahir al-Din Muhammad [Babur](#), the ruler of Kabul and of [Timurid](#) descent, defeated the much larger army of [Ibrahim Lodhi](#), the ruler of the large [North Indian Delhi Sultanate](#).

The battle was fought on [April 21](#) near the small village of [Panipat](#), in the present day Indian state of [Haryana](#), an area that has been the site of a number decisive battles for the control of Northern India since the twelfth century.

It is estimated that Babur's forces numbered about 15,000 men and he had between 15 to 20 pieces of [field artillery](#), however Lodhi had around 100,000 men, though that number included camp followers, while the fighting force was around 30,000 to 40,000 men in total, along with at least 100 [war elephants](#). Babur's guns proved decisive in battle, firstly because Ibrahim Lodhi lacked any field artillery but also because elephants are scared of

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guns. Babur could use the guns to scare the elephants away, causing them to trample Lodhi's own men. Babur was an inspirational leader of men and commanded a well disciplined army.

Ibrahim Lodhi died on the field of battle, abandoned by his feudatories and generals (many of whom were [mercenaries](#)), most of whom would change their allegiance to the new master of Delhi.

The battle marked the foundation of the Mughal Empire in India. The word *Mughal* means *Mongol* and alludes to the [Turkic](#) and [Mongol](#) origins of Babur and his officers, though the majority of his troops were of [Pathan](#), Indian and mixed [Central Asian](#) descent.