



SRI Y.N COLLEGE (A) NARSAPUR

(Affiliated to Adikavi Nannayya University)

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

GROUP DISCUSSION

2017-18

TOPIC: GOLDEN AGE OF SHAJAHAN

The Department of History conducted a Group Discussion on “Golden age of Shajahan” for BA Students on 28-12-2017. In this program the class was divided into A, B & C groups. 42 students actively participated in the discussion.

GOLDEN AGE OF SHAJAHAN



Akbar and Shahjahan were the most prominent rulers who ruled over India from A.D. 1556 to A.D. 1657. It was an era of peace and prosperity which dazzled the eyes of people at home and abroad due to grandeur of the Mughal emperors and their nobility. Foreign travelers like Bernier, Tavernier and Mannucci have lavished unstinted admiration on them. The reign of Akbar has been praised by all the scholars of history but historians have divergent opinions regarding the reign of Shahjahan. Smith writes that Shahjahan failed both as man and ruler, hence his reign could not be regarded as a Golden Age. But the contemporary scholar Khafi Khan and Rai Bharmal affirm that seeing the peace and prosperity of the reign of Shahjahan, it can very well be established that his reign was certainly a Golden Age. European travelers and writers like Bernier, Mannucci, Lane-poole and Elphinstone also agree with the view of contemporary writers because the Mughal Empire during the reign of Shahjahan had touched the zenith of its power and glory. Hunter also writes, "The Mughal Empire attained its highest union of strength and magnificence under Shahjahan,"

The views of scholars who regard his era to be a golden one can be affirmed from the words of S. R. Sharma who writes, "In spite of the early rebellions, which were soon curbed, in spite of the foreign wars of aggression beyond the frontiers, which cost enormously with no return whatsoever, in spite of the famine in Deccan and Gujarat, which devastated a vast portion of the country, and in spite of the constant fighting in Deccan, which while it resulted in the subjugation of Ahmadnagar, Golkunda and Bijapur, also involved a great drain on the resources of the empire, the age of Shahjahan showed much that was glorious and many an unmistakable sign of unique prosperity, to justify this period being described as the Golden Age of the empire."

Thus in spite of some weaknesses which developed during the reign of Shahjahan the following reasons clearly proves that it was really a golden age.

Shahjahan as a Man:

Shahjahan had many qualities as a man. He was a man of progressive nature and was the efficient successor of his father and grandfather. As he raised the standard of revolt against his father, so the scholars like V.A. Smith have condemned him for not being an obedient son but before lavying this charge on Shahjahan, we could also think that he was forced to revolt due to the excessive policies of queen Noorjahan. Moreover it was not a unique incident. He received this tendency in legacy. His father Jahangir had also revolted against his father. Dr. Smith has also condemned him for not being an ideal husband. But if we look into the practice and tradition of the Mughals, we would very well feel that since they maintained great harems, they could not be confined to one wife. However, he continued to love Mumtaz Mahal from the core of his heart so long as she remained alive. In his personal life Shahjahan was a gentle, benevolent and cultured ruler. He was a love of arts and literature and provided liberal patronage to the artists and men of letters.

Administrative Achievements:

The events of thefts and dacoities which were quite common earlier were reduced to the minimum and the general life of the people was quite safe. Travelling was no more a risky affair in his regime and his coffers were full of wealth which was a chief source of peace and prosperity in the empire.

His Military Successes:

Shahjahan besides being an efficient commander was a great warrior. He always took active parts in wars and achieved tremendous successes against his enemies. He took active part in military campaigns even in his old age. He reorganized and restrengthened

the Mughal army by his ability and capability. He achieved splendid success against the rules of Deccan and established his control over Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golkunda. In fact, his military achievements eclipsed the names of other brave Generals even during the reign of his father.

Improvement in Mansabdari System:

He made certain amendments and improvements in the prevalent mansabdari system. He reduced the pay of the mansabdars and made it essential that they should maintain a contingent according to their post and designation. A person who had his Jagir in India was required to maintain at least one-third contingent of his mansab whereas who possessed Jagirs outside India was ordered to maintain one-fourth contingent of his Mansab.

Revenue system :

Shahjahan introduced some significant changes in the revenue system in order to fill his coffers with wealth which he needed for the construction of palatial buildings and for the welfare of his people.

So far $\frac{1}{3}$ of the produce was realized as revenue but he raised it to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the total produce. It added to the income of the empire. Moreland had praised Shahjahan for raising the income of the empire. Trade and industry also flourished during the regime of Shahjahan as there was uninterrupted peace in his empire.

Administration of Justice:

Like his predecessors Shahjahan dispensed evenhanded justice to all his people without distinction of post, caste and creed. He himself acted as Chief Justice in the empire and listened to the appeals of all the cases. As severe punishments were awarded, people were afraid of committing any crime. Wednesday was fixed by the emperor for the administration of justice in his court. He kept a close eye on the

conduct of his officials and punished those rigorously who either did not discharge their duties efficiently or put hurdles in the way of dispensing evenhanded justice to all.

Works of public welfare:

Though Shahjahan was an autocrat but he always looked after the welfare of his people. He made proper arrangements for irrigation and got canals dug for the benefit of the peasants. He also built schools, collages, mosques, sarais and arranged gardens for the good of his people. No doubt he was a bit reactionary and fanatic but it did not affect his popularity at all. He was an industrious and dutiful ruler and devoted a great part of his life to administration. He did every possible act to redress the sufferings of the people at the time of famines of A.D. 1630 and 1646.

Progress in Education and Literature:

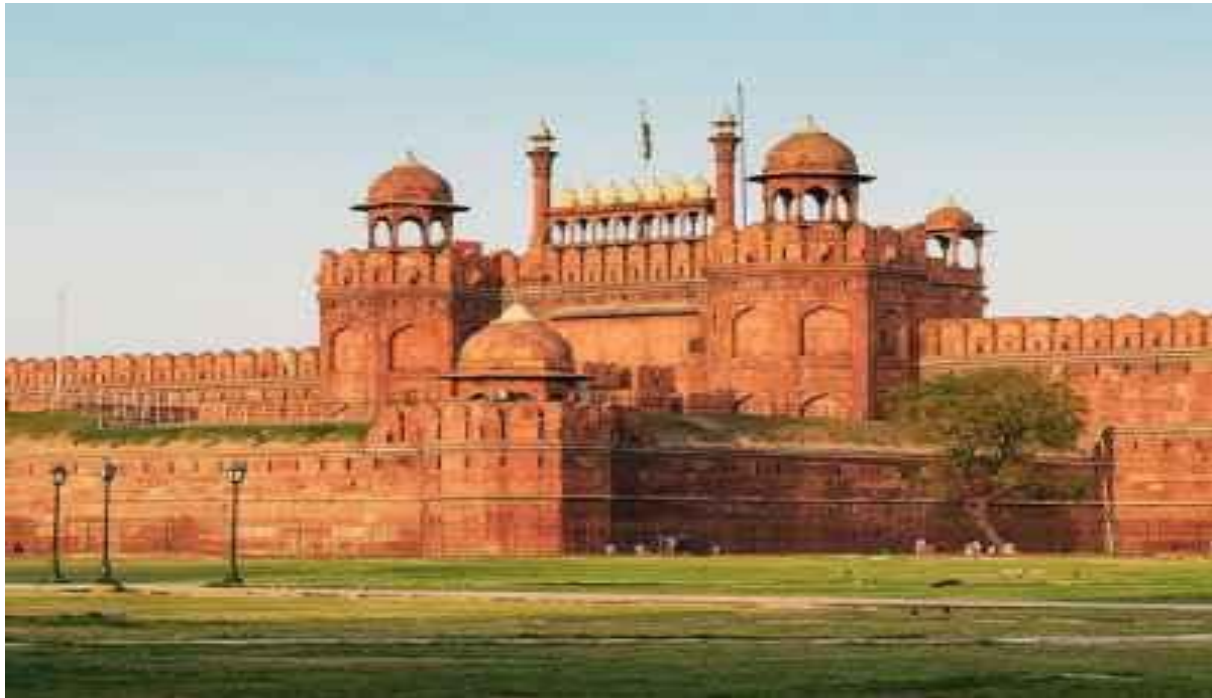
Shahjahan was a great patron of education and literature like his predecessors. He continued the liberal educational policy of his great-grandfather. Akbar's reign contributed much to the development of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit literature. Jahangir and Shahjahan also followed in the footsteps of their predecessor and let the literary movement continued during their reigns. Several books of Sanskrit were translated into Persian during his reign. Historians like Abdul Hamid Lahori, Khafi Khan Etc, also enjoyed liberal patronage of the emperor. Science, technology and the art of astrology also flourished during his regime.



Kohinoor Diamond

Development of various Arts:

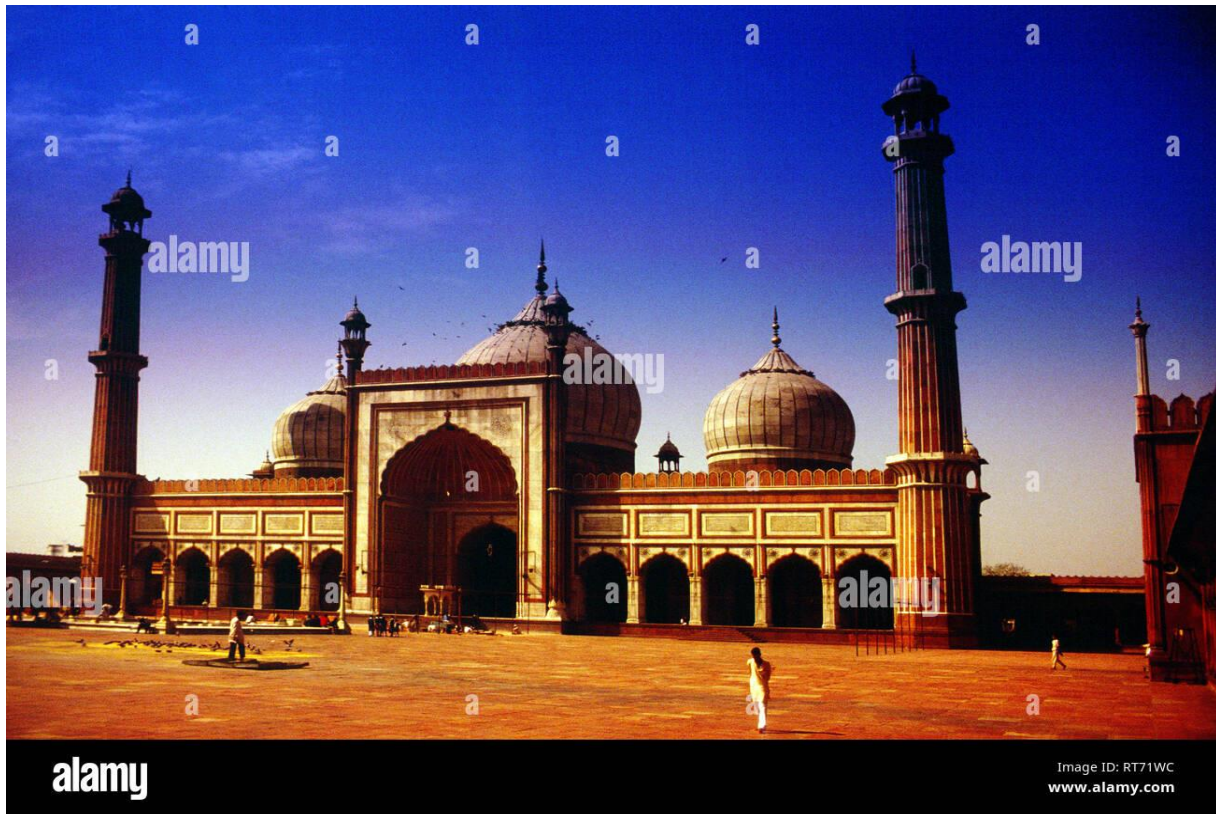
Shahjahan was not merely a commander or a warrior. He had a deep insight for various arts. Architecture reached its zenith during his regime. He was really a builder par excellence and his age was certainly a golden one from the point of view of architecture. Dr. B.P. Saxena writes, "it was impossible to improve painting so naturally he turned to architecture which provided an extensive field for improvement. And the buildings of his reign must have satisfied both his vanity and ambitions. Red fort and its allied buildings in Delhi are marvelous in beauty and the buildings which Shahjahan constructed in the fort of Agrasuch as Moti Masjid, Diwan-i-Aam, Diwan-i-Khas and Musammam Burj are fine specimens of architecture.



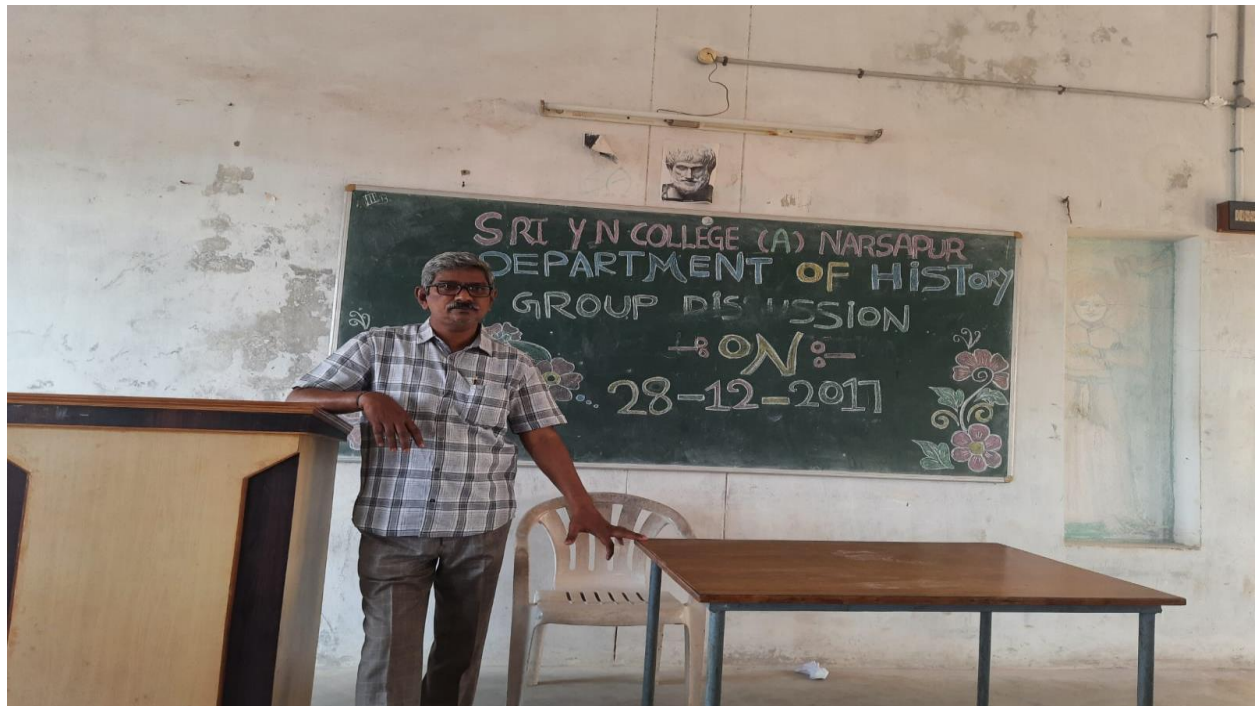
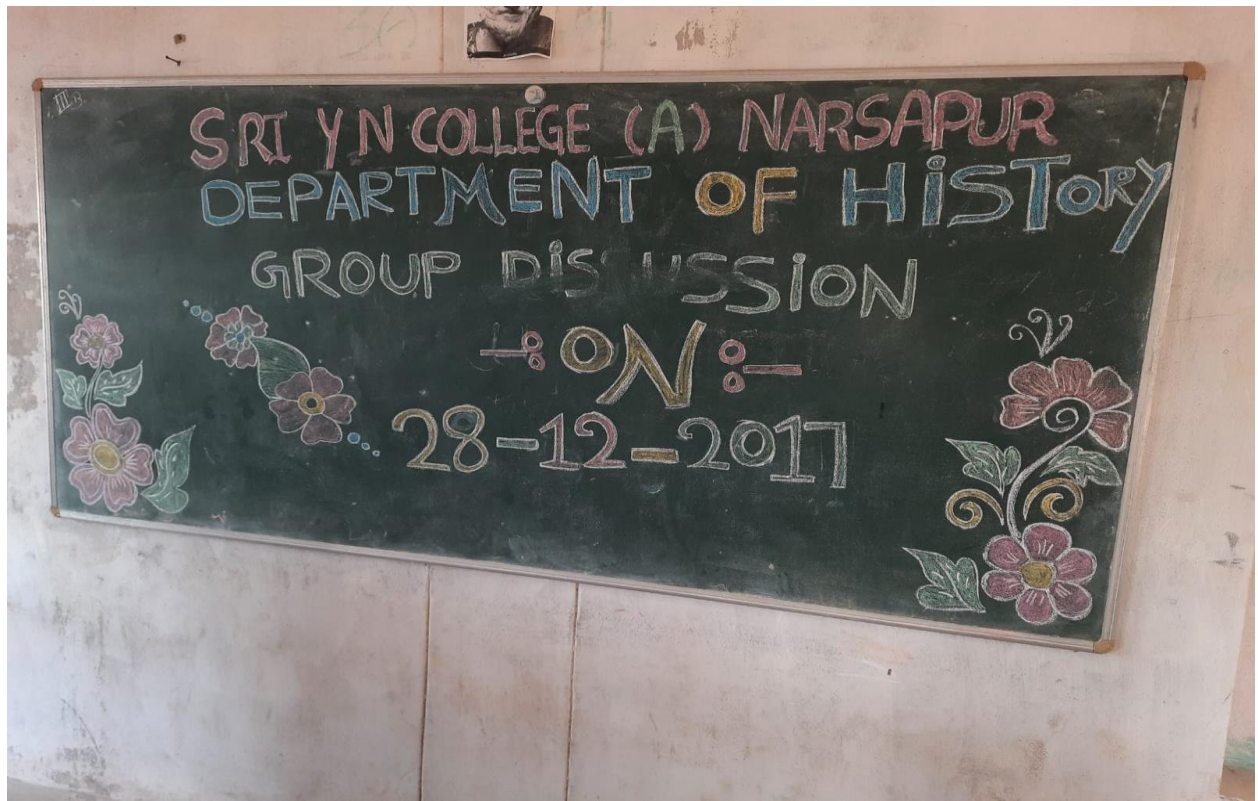
The Taj Mahal is the best creation of the Mughal period. Its architectural beauty beggars all description. It was built by emperor Shahjahan as a mausoleum of his beloved wife Arjumand Banu Begum, also known as Mumtaz Mahal who breathed her last in A.D. 1631. Almost all historians and scholars have praised its architectural beauty.



Seeing the achievements of Shahjahan in the field of architecture Dr.A.L. Srivastava has rightly remarked, “Shahjahan reign has been described as a golden period in the medieval history of India. This is true in one respect only and that is in the domain of art, particularly architecture.”



On the basis of the above description it can very well be affirmed that in spite of some shortcomings in the character of Emperor Shahjahan and outburst of some early revolts in the empire, the era of Shahjahan was splendid. During this period we witnessed all-round progress and development and architecture reached its zenith, hence it will not be out of place to accept his era as golden period of Medieval History.



HOD OF HISTORY MR. S. SOMA SEKHAR CONDUCTING THE GROUP DISCUSSION

HOD S.SOMA SEKHAR SIR GIVING GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS TO STUDENTS.



STUDENTS PREPARING FOR THE GROUP DISCUSSION.

STUDENTS DISCUSSING THE TOPIC.



Conclusion:

Group discussions increase students thinking capacity and help them in avoiding the stage fear. It also improves knowledge on the subject.

Department of History conduct Group discussions every year on different topics related to the subject.