

Introduction to red fort essay sample



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The Red Fort (usually transcribed into English as Lal Qil'ah or Lal Qila) is a 17th century fort complex constructed by the Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan[1] in the walled city of Old Delhi (in present day Delhi, India) that served as the residence of the Mughal Emperors. The fort was the palace for Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan's new capital, Shahjahanabad, the seventh city in the Delhi site. He moved his capital here from Agra in a move designed to bring prestige to his reign, and to provide ample opportunity to apply his ambitious building schemes and interests. It served as the capital of the Mughals until 1857, when Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar was exiled by the British Indian government. Location-

The fort lies along the Yamuna River, which fed the moats that surround most of the walls.[2] The wall at its north-eastern corner is adjacent to an older fort, the Salimgarh Fort, a defence built by Islam Shah Suri in 1546.

Construction-

The construction of the Red Fort began in 1638 and was completed by 1648. The Red Fort has had many developments added on after its construction by Emperor Shah Jahan. The significant phases of development were under Aurangzeb and later under later Mughal rulers. It was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007.[3][4] The earlier Red Fort was built by Tomara king Anangpala, now known as the Qulb Mosque.[5] History-

The Red Fort derives its name from the extensive use of red sandstone on the massive walls that surround the fort. Shah Jahan commissioned the construction of the Red Fort in 1638 when he decided to shift his capital from Agra to Delhi. Ustad Ahmad and Ustad Hamid were chosen as the architects

for construction of the royal palace. Construction began in the auspicious month of Muharram on 13 May 1638. Construction of the fort was supervised by Shah Jahan himself. The Red Fort was originally referred to as “ Qila-i-Mubarak” (the blessed fort), because it was the residence of the royal family. Unlike the other Mughal forts, layout of the boundary walls of the Red Fort is not symmetrical so as to retain and integrate the older Salimgarh Fort. The fortress palace was an important focal point of the medieval city of Shahjahanabad (present day Old Delhi). The administrative and fiscal structure of the Mughals declined after Aurangzeb. The 18th century thus saw a degeneration of the palace and people of the Red Fort. When Jahandar Shah took over the Red Fort in 1712, the palace had been without an emperor for 30 years.

Within a year of his rule, Jahandar Shah was murdered and replaced by Farukhsiyar. To combat the declining finances, the silver ceiling of the palace Rang Mahal was replaced by copper during this period. Muhammad Shah, who was also known as Rangila (the colourful) for his deep interest in arts, took over the Red Fort in 1719. In 1739, Nadir Shah, the Persian emperor, attacked the Mughals. The Mughal army was easily defeated and Nadir Shah plundered the Red Fort of its riches including the Peacock Throne. Nadir Shah returned to Persia after three months leaving a destroyed city and a weakening Mughal empire to Muhammad Shah.[6]: 09 The internal weaknesses of the Mughal empire turned Mughals into titular heads of Delhi. A treaty signed in 1752 made Marathas the protector of the throne at Delhi. The Maratha conquest of Lahore in 1758, put them in direct confrontation with Ahmad Shah Durrani. In 1761, after the Marathas lost the third battle of

Panipat, Delhi was raided by Ahmed Shah Durrani. In 1771, Shah Alam ascended to the throne in Delhi with the support of the Marathas. In 1803, during the Second Anglo-Maratha War, the forces of British East India Company defeated the Maratha forces in the Battle of Delhi, ending the Maratha rule over the city and their control over the fort.

Red Fort in Delhi, 1905

After the Battle of Delhi, British took over the administration of Mughal territories and installed a Resident at the Mughal courts in Red Fort. Despite being the seat of Mughal power and its defensive capabilities, the Red Fort was not defended during the 1857 uprising against the British. After the failure of the rebellion, Zafar left the fort on 17 September. He returned to Red Fort as a prisoner of the British and was tried in 1858 and was exiled to Rangoon on 7 October of the same year. With the end of the Mughal reign, the British gave official sanctions to remove and sell valuables from the palace at the Red Fort. In 1863, British destroyed many buildings inside and outside the fort, filled up the gardens, stripped the fort of any valuable items and reduced the fort to just a military structure. A significant part of the fort remained under the control of the Indian Army until 22 December 2003, when it was handed over to the Archaeological Survey of India for restoration. Architectural designs

The Red Fort covers a total area of about 254.67 acres enclosed within 2.4 kilometres of defence walls. The walls are punctuated by turrets and bastions. They vary in height from 18 m on the river side to 33 m on the city side. The fort is shaped like an octagon with the north-south axis longer than the east-west axis. The use of marble, floral decorations, double domes in

the buildings inside the fort exemplifies the later phase of Mughal architecture. Important structures-

Diwan-i-aam

In the Diwan-i-Aam or the Hall of Public Audiences the emperor, seated in a canopied alcove, would hear complaints and pleas of the commoners through a jharokha (balcony). The hall was ornamented with stuccowork and featured a series of gold columns. Diwaan-i-khaas

In the Diwan-i-Khas or the Hall of Private Audiences the Emperor held private meetings with courtiers and state guests. The hall comprises a rectangular chamber with engraved arched openings supported on piers, on all of its sides. Each of the piers is gilded, painted and decorated with floral designs. Pillared chatris (umbrellas) cover the corners of the roof. At the centre of the chamber, the famous Peacock Throne throne was placed over a marble pedestal.[5] The throne was looted in 1739 by Nadir Shah. Others-

Other attractions within Red Fort include:[26]

* The Hammams (Royal Baths)

* The Muthamman-Burj was the octagonal tower where the emperor appeared before the commoners. * The Rang Mahal (Palace of Colours) housed the Emperor's wives and mistresses. This palace was crowned with gilded turrets. It was painted and decorated with an intricate mosaic of mirrors. It also had a ceiling overlaid with gold and silver that was reflected in a central pool, which was located in the marble floor of the palace. *

Naqqar Khana (Drum House) was located at the entrance point of the Rang Mahal. Music was played at specific times in the day alongside a large gate.

People who visited the fort and would come on elephants, would get off of at this gate.