

3. India on the Eve of British Conquest

Introduction:

- The first half of the 18th century saw the decline of Mughals.
- The reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707) was the **beginning of the end of Mughal rule in India**.
- Aurangzeb's misguided policies weakened the stability of the state and the decline gained momentum after his death due to wars of succession and weak rulers.
- Muhammad Shah ruled for 29 years (1719-48) but could not revive the imperial fortunes.
- New states of Hyderabad, Bengal, Awadh and Punjab established and the Marathas began to make their bid to inherit the imperial mantle.

▪ Some of the causes for the decline of Mughal power in India:

1. **Neglect of North-West border by later Mughal rulers.** This paved the way for **Nadir Shah** and **Ahmed Shah Abdali** to loot Delhi on several occasions. This not only dented the treasury but also dealt a severe blow the prestige of Mughal rulers in India
2. **Ahmed shah Abdali** even defeated the **Marathas** in the **third battle of Panipat in 1761**
3. **Long succession of weak rulers** who possessed **no administrative acumen** further accentuated the decline of Mughals in India
4. **Shift of allegiance of Zamindars:** **Zamindars** maintained **band of soldiers**. Towards the end of Aurangzeb rule there was marked increase in their power and influence. This resulted in **separatist** tendencies among the class
5. Many powerful **regional groups** like the **Jats, Sikhs and Marathas** defied the authority of the Mughal state to create their own kingdoms.
6. In case of Marathas, their regional aspirations grew and they gained legal authority to collect **Sardeshmukhi and Chowth**

7. **No significant scientific and technological** advancement aggravated the problem.
8. **Poor Economic Management** coupled with **luxurious lifestyle** of Mughals.
9. The **deterioration of army** also proved disastrous for the empire.
10. **Aurangzeb's religious policy** was largely responsible, leading to revolts by Rajputs, Sikhs, Jats and Marathas.

▪ Later Mughal Rulers:

1. **Bahadur Shah I (1707-1712 AD)**

- Abolished Jiziya once again
- Released Sahu from Agra jail
- Recognized Raja Ajit Singh as the ruler of Malwa

2. **Jahandar Shah (1712-1713 AD)**

- He came to power with support of Wazir Zulfiqar Ali
- Mughal advisors became powerful in the court process from his time onwards

3. **FarukhSiyar (1713-1719 AD)**

- He came to power with the help of sayidd brothers
- Banda Bahadur was executed during this time.

4. **Mohammad Shah (1719-1748 AD)**

- He was known popularly as **Rangeela**.
- Sayidd brothers were killed during his time
- Bengal became independent under Murshidquli Khan
- Sadat khan found the state of outhd
- Asaf Jha founded the independent state of Hyderabad
- Nadir shah attacked Delhi in 1739 AD during his time

5. **Ahmed Shah (1748-1754 AD)**

- Ahmad Shah Bahadur also known as Mirza

Ahmad Shah or Mujahid-ud-Din Ahmad Shah Ghazi.

- He was born to Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah.
- He succeeded his father to the throne as the fourteenth Mughal Emperor in 1748 at the age of 22.
- When Ahmed Shah Bahadur came to power, the Mughal Empire was collapsing.
- Furthermore, his administrative weaknesses eventually led to the rise of the usurping Feroze Jung III

6. Alamgir II (1754-1759 AD)

- His real name was **Azizuddin**
- Battle of Plassey was fought during his time
- Ahmed Shah Abdali attacked Delhi several times during his reign

7. Shah Alam II (1759-1806AD)

- Third battle of Panipat (1761) and battle of Buxar (1764) were fought during this time
- He took part in Allahabad treaty
- He also became the prisoner of the English after the Second Anglo-Maratha war

8. Akbar II (1806-1837 AD)

- He conferred the title of 'Raja' upon Rammohan Roy

9. Bahadur Shah II Zafar (1837-1857 AD)

- Nominal head to 1857 revolt
- He was deported to Burma where he breathed his last.

Rise of Regional States

Type	Methods of Establishing States	Names
Success or state	They did not challenge the authority of Mughals but their governors established virtually independent and hereditary authority within Mughal empire	Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad
Independent Kingdoms	These were established due to destabilization of Mughal empire	Mysore, Kerala and the Rajputs.
The New states	These were set by rebels against Mughal empire	Maratha, the Sikh and the Jats

Survey of Regional Kingdoms

Name	Founder	Rulers	Activities
Hyderabad	Kilich Khan known as Nizam-ul-Mulk	Nizam-ul-Mulk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ In the Battle of Shahr-Khedra, He defeated Mubaraiz Khan (1724), viceroy of Deccan and assumed control of deccan (1725) and conferred upon himself title of Asaf-Jah.
Awadh	Saadat Khan, known as Burhan-ul-Mulk	1.Saadat Khan 2. Safdar Jang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Saadat Khan had joined in a conspiracy against the Sayyid brothers, which resulted in earning increased mansab. ✓ Later, driven out of the court, he was prompted to found a new independent state. He was succeeded by Safdar Jang.
Bengal	Murshid Quli Khan	1.Murshid Kuli Khan 2.Shuja-ud-din 3.Sarfraz Khan 4.Alivardi Khan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ His son Shuja-ud-din succeeded in 1727. ✓ His successor, Sarfraz Khan, was killed in 1740 by Alivardi Khan. ✓ He then assumed power and made himself independent of the Mughal emperor by giving yearly tribute.
Mysore	Initially were ruled by the Wodeyars, later Hyder Ali usurped the power	1.The Wodeyars 2.Hyder Ali 3. Tipu Sultan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Located at the junction of the Eastern and Western Ghats thus, region was constant battlefield due to its prosperity. ✓ Hyder Ali overthrew Wodeyars and established himself. ✓ He and his son Tipu Sultan was involved in constant warfare with the British.
Kerala	Martanda Varma	MartandaVarma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Capital Travancore. ✓ He extended the boundaries of his state from Kanyakumari to Cochin. ✓ He made efforts to organise his army along the Western model. ✓ He defeated dutch naval forces in the battle of Colacher.
The Jats	Churaman and Badan Singh	1.Churaman and Badan Singh 2.Suraj Mal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Jat state of Bharatpur was founded by revolting against Aurangzeb. ✓ Suraj Mal provided an efficient system of administration and extended the territory of the state. ✓ His state included territories near Ganga, Chambal, Agra, Mathura, Meerut and Aligarh. ✓ However, the Jat state suffered a decline after the death of Suraj Mal in 1763. Thereafter, the state split into small areas.

The Sikhs	Guru Gobind Singh	1. Guru Gobind Singh. 2. Banda Bahadur 3. Ranjit Singh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Guru Gobind Singh transformed the Sikhs into a militant sect to defend their religion and liberties. ✓ Banda Bahadur, assumed the leadership of the Sikhs in 1708, was defeated and killed. ✓ Later, Sikhs were divided among 12 confederacies/misls. ✓ Ranjit Singh brought all misls under his control. He was the son of Mahan Singh, the leader of the Sukarchakiamisl. ✓ State extended from Jhelum to Sutlej, conquered Lahore in 1799 and Amritsar in 1802. ✓ Treaty of Amritsar-Ranjit Singh acknowledged the British right over the cis- Sutlej territories. He greatly modernised his army with the help of Europeans. But towards the end of his reign, the English forced him to sign the Tripartite Treaty in 1838 with Shah Shuja and the English Company whereby he agreed to provide passage to the British troops through Punjab with a view to placing Shah Shuja on the throne of Kabul. Ranjit Singh died in 1839. His successors could not keep the state intact and, soon enough, the British took control over it.
The Marathas	Shivaji Maharaj		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The most formidable province after Mughals. Marathas uprooted the Mughal authority from Malwa and Gujarat and established their rule. ✓ They were about to dominate Indian polity but was defeated in Panipat. Later, they provided formidable challenge to the English East India Company in the struggle for political supremacy in India.
Rohilakhand and Farukhabad	Mohammad Khan Bangash		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Kingdom of Bangash Pathans- migrated Afghans. ✓ At the foothills of Himalayas, Rohilakhand was present and thus inhabitants were called as Rohillas. ✓ Mohammad Khan Bangash, an Afghan, set up an independent kingdom to the east of Delhi in the area around Farukhabad.

▪ **Nature and Limitations of Regional States:**

- All regional powers continued to **maintain ties** with the Mughal imperial authority and acknowledged the emperor's importance.
- Polity was **regional in character**, with support of local chieftains.
- They **failed to develop a system** based on sound financial, administrative and military organisation and **backward** in science and technology
- **Constant warfare** with neighbours with no ultimate dominator.

- **Jagirdari crisis** intensified due to decline in agricultural income
- Although trade, internal and foreign, continued without disruption and even prospered, the rest of **the economy stagnated**.

▪ **Socio-Economic Conditions:**

- a. **Agriculture:** It was technically backward but peasants worked hard for it. However, they did not have adequate returns from it, as they were always oppressed by rulers for exorbitant taxes. Nonetheless, situation worsened under British.

b. Trade and Industry: India was **self-sufficient in Handicrafts and agricultural products** thus didn't import much. But we exported the same. **So, export was higher than import.**

Items of Import:

1. **Persian Gulf Region**— pearls, raw silk, wool, dates, dried fruits, and rose water;
2. **Arabia**—coffee, gold, drugs, and honey;
3. **China**—tea, sugar, porcelain, and silk;
4. **Tibet**—gold, musk, and woollen cloth;
5. **Africa**—ivory and drugs;
6. **Europe**— woollen cloth, copper, iron, lead and paper.

Items of Export:

Cotton textiles, raw silk and silk fabrics, hardware, indigo, saltpetre, opium, rice, wheat, sugar, pepper and other spices, precious stones, and drugs.

Important Centres of Textile Industry:

Dacca, Murshidabad, Patna, Surat, Ahmedabad, Broach, Chanderi, Burhanpur, Jaunpur, Varanasi, Lucknow, Agra, Multan, Lahore, Masulipatnam, Aurangabad, Chicacole, Vishakhapatnam, Bangalore, Coimbatore, Madurai, etc.; Kashmir was a centre of woollen manufactures.

Ship-building Industry: Maharashtra, Andhra and Bengal were the leaders in ship-building. The Zamorin of Calicut used the Muslim **Kunjali Maraikkars** (who were well known for their seafaring ability) for his navy. Shivaji's navy was one of the best in region.

c. Status of Education:

- Education was on traditional lines and it discouraged development of any original thoughts.
- The knowledge was confined to literature, law, religion, philosophy, and logic and excluded the study of physical and natural sciences, technology and geography.
- Elementary education was widespread in Hindu (Pathshalas) and Muslims (Maktabs).
- **Chatuspathisor Tols**, for Hindus, were centres of higher education. Famous centres for Sanskrit education were **Kasi** (Varanasi), **Tirhut** (Mithila), and Utkala. Madrashas-

institutions of higher learning for Persian and Arabic. **Azimabad** (Patna) was a famous centre for Persian education.

d. Societal Set-Up:

1) Many Castes, Many Sects:

- There was certain degree of **broad cultural unity** but people **were divided** by caste, religion, region, tribe and language.
- Patriarchal families with caste being integral part of society. Although some exceptions occurred on a large scale, making caste status quite fluid in some parts of the country.
- Divisions occurred in other religions too. Example: The **sharif** Muslims -nobles, scholars, priests and army officials. **Ajlaf**- lower class Muslims on similar lines of Hindus

2) Position of Women in Society:

- Women had little individuality of their own. Mostly upper-class women remained at home, lower class women worked in fields and outside their homes supplementing the family income.
- **Purdah, sati, Dowry, child marriage, polygamy existed**- affecting the progress of woman. Raja Sawai Jai Singh of Amber and the Maratha General Prashuram Bhau tried to promote widow remarriage but failed.

3) Menace of Slavery:

- European travellers and administrators reported widespread slavery in India.
- However, their condition was much better than in European region.
- Women slaves for household works. The advent of Europeans heightened the slavery and slave trade in India.

e. Development in art, architecture and culture:

- At **Lucknow**, **Asaf-ud-Daula** built the **Bada Imambara** in **1784**.
- The **first half of the 18th century**, **Sawai Jai Singh** built the pink city of **Jaipur** and five **astronomical observatories** at Delhi, Jaipur, Benares, Mathura and Ujjain.

- He also **prepared a set of time-tables called Jij Muhammad-shahi**, to help the people in the study of astronomy.
- A distinct feature of the **literary life of the 18th century** was the **growth of Urdu language** and poetry.
- The **Tamil language** was enriched by **sittar poetry**.
- In **Sindhi literature**, Shah Abdul Latif composed **Risalo**, a **collection of poems**.

▪ **Subsidiary Alliance:**

- It is a treaty between the British East India Company and the Indian princely states, by virtue of which the Indian kingdoms lost their sovereignty to the English.

Features of the Act:

- It was framed by **Lord Wellesley**, the Governor-General of India **from 1798 to 1805**.
- It was actually used for the **first time** by the French Governor-General Marquis **Dupleix**.
- An Indian ruler entering into Subsidiary Alliance with the British had to dissolve his own armed forces and accept British forces in his territory
- He also had to pay for the British army's maintenance. If he failed to make the payment, a portion of his territory would be taken away and ceded to the British.
- The **British promised non-interference in internal affairs of the Indian state**. The native ruler had to surrender the power to conduct the international relation (with Indian Ruler outside their rule and other power of the world) to company.
- The Indian state could not enter into any alliance with any other foreign power.
- He could also not employ any other foreign nationals other than Englishmen in his service.
- The Indian state could also not enter into any political connection with another Indian state without British approval.
- A British Resident was stationed in the Indian Court.

Effect of the alliance:

Dissolving of the army led to loss of many jobs, East India Company become the de-facto ruler.

▪ **Doctrine of Lapse:**

The Doctrine of Lapse was an **annexation policy followed widely by Lord Dalhousie** when he was India's Governor-General from **1848 to 1856**.

Features of the policy:

- According to this, any princely state under the direct or indirect (as a vassal) control of the East India Company where the ruler did not have a legal male heir would be annexed by the company.
- As per this, **any adopted son of the Indian ruler could not be proclaimed as heir** to the kingdom. The adopted son would only inherit his foster father's personal property and estates.
- The adopted son would also **not be entitled to any pension** that his father had been receiving or to any of his father's titles.
- In 1824, before the time of Dalhousie, the princely state of Kittur was acquired by the East India Company by this doctrine.

Effect of this policy:

Many Indian states lost their sovereignty and became British territories. The 'illegal' nature of this doctrine was one of the causes of the Indian revolt 1857.

Why the Marathas cannot become a pan India power?

- Internal defect in their polity like presence of feudal structure i.e., division of power between Peshwa and Sardar.
- Absence of any sustainable revenue structure
- Taxes like Chauth (a kind of protection money) on outside rulers created differences which led to war of Panipat.
- After Shivaji socio-economic reform was totally neglected.

Why Maratha has lost the battle of supremacy with British?

- Better espionage and diplomacy of British
- Maratha's left their gurreila war style but they were not able to adopt European style well
- Technological backwardness
- After Nana Phadnavis, Yashwantraoholkar, Mahadjisindhia there was dearth of able personality.

▪ Reforms and development that were introduced by Tipu and Hyder Ali:

- State commercial corporation
- Factories for trade
- Agriculture reform
- Army reform
- Introduction of rocket
- Army on European line
- Establishment of arm factory

▪ Causes of British Success in India:

- Superior arms, military and strategy
- Better military discipline and regular salary
- Civil Discipline and fair selection system - The Company officers and troops were given charge on the basis of their reliability and skill and not on hereditary or caste and clan ties
- Brilliant Leadership and Support of Second Line Leaders - The English also had the advantage of a long list of secondary leaders like Sir Eyre Coote, Lord Lake and Arthur Wellesley etc.,
- Strong Financial backup