

## **Political Formation in Eighteenth Century India**

### **Exercises**

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#### **Long answer questions:**

1. Discuss at least three reasons that led to the decline of the Mughal Empire.
2. Write a paragraph on administration during Shivaji's rule.
3. What changes did Shivaji introduce in military administration?
4. Describe the struggle of the Sikhs to form an independent Sikh state.

## Solutions

### Long-answer questions:

1. The decline of the Mughal Empire was due to a combination of reasons. It began during the last years of Aurangzeb's rule.

Aurangzeb was intolerant to other religions. His orthodox religious policy led to dissatisfaction among the people and invoked the wrath of both the Hindus and the Shia Muslims. Also, his successors were weak and the empire was left in the hands of the nobles who were corrupt, selfish and greedy. Widespread corruption weakened the empire. There were no definite laws of succession. There was frequent change in the succession of emperors. The wars of succession led to bitterness, bloodshed, loss of money and prestige and the eventual downfall of the empire.

2. Shivaji was a proficient administrator. He looked into the welfare of his people. He was assisted by a cabinet of eight ministers. The chief minister was the Peshwa. He was responsible for the welfare of people and co-ordination of various departments. The Amatya looked after the accounts. The *Mantri* was the home minister and the *Sachiv* was responsible for all royal letters and accounts of the *Paraganas*. The *Senapati* recruited and trained soldiers. The highest judicial authority was the *Nyayadhish*. *Danadhyakshya* looked after the charitable works.

Shivaji's revenue system was well-organised. The farmers paid two-third of the produce as revenue. In parts of the Mughal Empire which were under Shivaji's authority, two types of taxes were levied. Chauth was one-fourth of the land revenue. *Sardeshmukhi* was one-tenth of the land revenue. He cautioned the officials against harassment. Shivaji was just and approachable to all.

- 3.** Many changes were introduced in the military administration. Shivaji had a standing army called *Paga*. He introduced guerilla and commando warfare. He initiated the use of *bagh nakh* (tiger claw), a traditional weapon designed to fit over the knuckles. He also invented a weapon called *vita*. He had infantry, cavalry and navy. He enforced strict disciplinary measures in the army and had an efficient network of spies.
- 4.** Aurangzeb was against the Sikhs and forced them to convert to Islam. Those who refused were killed. Guru Teg Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh were put to death. After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, Banda Bahadur became the commander of the Khalsa. The Sikhs rose in revolt under his leadership. The aim of this organization was to safeguard Sikhs against the Mughals. Many Sikhs joined him to avenge the death of the gurus. In 1710, the first Sikh state was established. Now the Sikhs organized themselves into 12 *misls* or jathas. Later Maharaja Ranjit Singh became the leader of all the *misls*. He expanded the borders of the Sikh kingdom. Even the British did not dare attack and conquer this area until Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death.