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For Civil Services Preliminary & Mains Examination

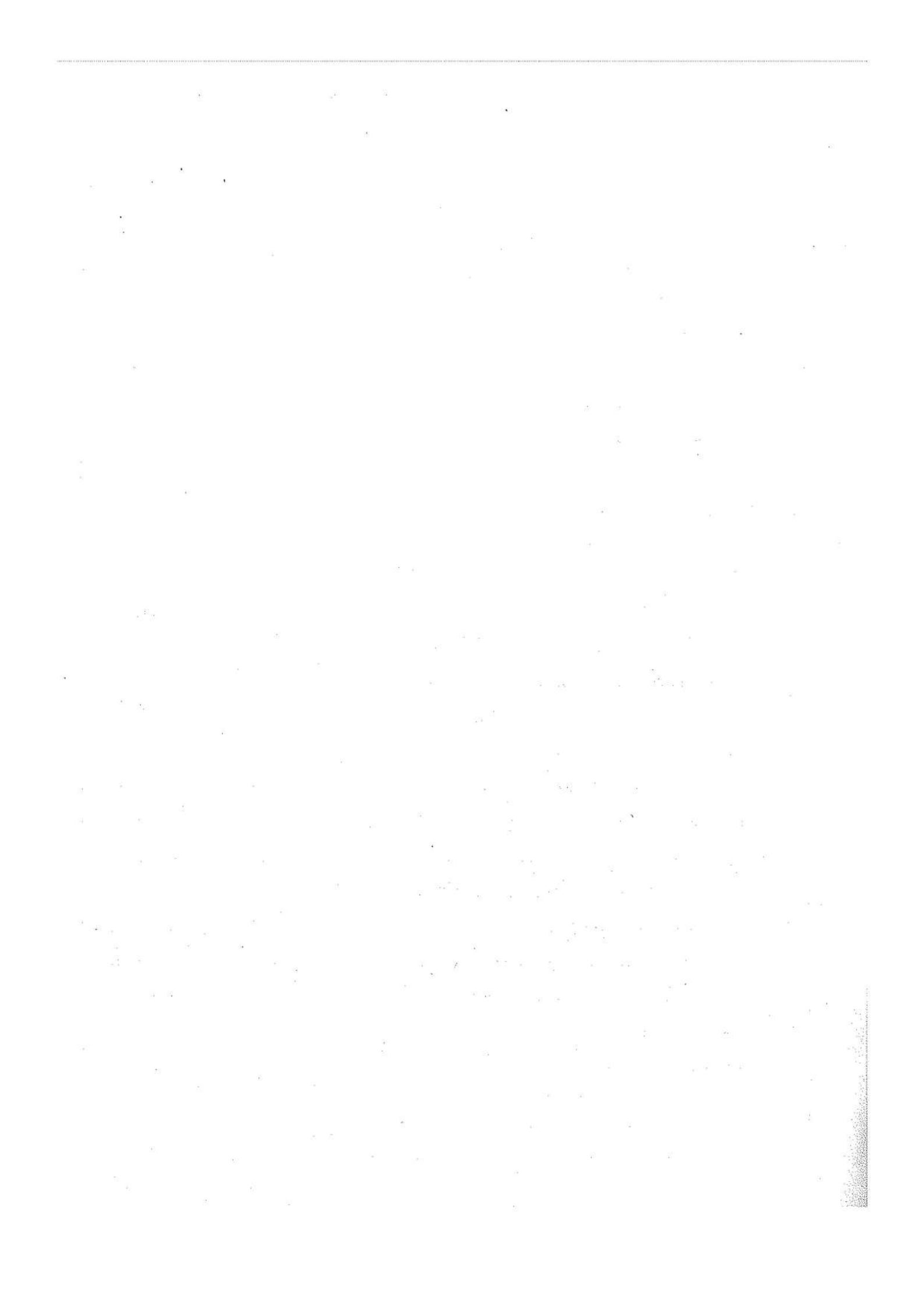# KAVISH IAS
Converting Possibilities into Reality

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Index

RISE OF REGIONAL POWERS

CHAPTER- 1

INDIAN POLITY IN THE MID-18TH CENTURY

18th Century: A Dark Age?

The 18th century was regarded as a Dark Age, characterised by disorder and unrest. The Mughal Empire had crumbled, local powers had failed to establish empires, and it was only with the rise of British control in the late 18th century that stability was restored. It was convenient for the British authors of the Cambridge History of India, as well as their Indian supporters, to portray the 18th century as bleak in order for British rule to appear as a blessing in comparison. Historian Jadunath Sarkar's word in the History of Bengal, Vol. II, deserves to be quoted:

"On 23rd June 1757, the Middle ages of India ended and her contemporary age began in the twenty years from Plassey, Warren Hastings ... all felt the revivifying touch of the impetus from the west."

There are obvious troubles with such a view. The Mughal Empire's control was not as vast or profound as it was supposed. Several social groups, as well as important portions of India, particularly in the North East and South, remained outside of it. As a result, the decline of the Mughals cannot be used to analyse the changes that are occurring all over India. Scholars have recently argued that the establishment of local politics was perhaps the dominant characteristic of the eighteenth century, rather than the fall and rise of all-India empires. Satish Chandra, a famous mediaeval Indian historian, presents the 18th century as a single historical totality, rather than two halves, pre-British and British.

Decline of the Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire was on the fall in the first half of the eighteenth century. Nadir Shah had wreaked havoc on Delhi from 1740 onwards, when our study begins. In 1761, the Marathas, not the Mughals, battled Abdali. Till 1783 the Mughal emperor was a pensioner of the British.

Internal Weaknesses: Struggle for Power

Aurangzeb's misguided policies had weakened the stable Mughal polity. However, the empire's two primary pillars—the army and the administration—were still standing in 1707. From 1707 through 1719, Delhi was plagued by succession wars and weak governors.

Muhammad Shah's rule from 1719 to 1748 was extensive enough for the revival of imperial fortunes but the complete incompetence of the emperor ruled out this possibility.

In 1724, Nizam-ul-Mulk resigned as wazir and established the self-governing state of Hyderabad in his region. The empire was divided into successor states after Bengal, Awadh, and Punjab followed the same pattern. Petty chiefs regarded this as a call to arms, and the Marathas began planning their campaign to take over the throne.

External Challenge

In 1738-1739, the Persian ruler Nadir Shah launched an invasion on India. On the 13th of February 1739, the Mughal army was beaten at Karnal, and Lahore was shortly taken. The Mughal emperor Mohammed Shah was seized to add insult to injury, and Delhi was razed to the ground. Mir and Sauda, two well-known poets, bemoaned Delhi's devastation. The impact of Nadir Shah's invasion on Delhi, however, was not as severe as widely assumed. The assaults of Abdali wreaked havoc on Delhi, but by 1772, the city had recovered.

70 crores of rupees were gathered from the official treasury and the safes of the rich nobles. His most valuable possessions were the Peacock Throne and the Kohinoor diamond. Nadir Shah conquered strategic Mughal territory west of the Indus River, including Kabul. India was once again at risk from assaults from the northwestern hemisphere.

After Nadir Shah's death, Ahmad Shah Abdali rose to fame as Nadir Shah's commander and was acknowledged for his leadership over Afghanistan. Several times, he invaded North India, flanked between the years 1748 and 1767. His victory over the Marathas in 1761, which is known as the third Battle of Panipat, is the most well-known.

Decline: Some Interpretations

Over the years, our understanding of the demise of Mughal power has evolved. The traditional view, as expressed by Irving, Sarkar, and others, focused on the emperors' and nobles' personal faults, immorality, and indulgence in luxury. Mughal authority was portrayed as Muslim tyranny by Sarkar and others, and the Maratha, Sikh, and Bundela revolutions were seen as a Hindu response to the Islamic invasion.

In contrast to this viewpoint, Satish Chandra and Ir-

fan Habib have correctly highlighted the Mughal economic system's collapse. The deterioration, according to Satish Chandra, is due to a crisis in the jagirdari system, which is caused by a shortage of jagirs and an overabundance of jagirdars. As the burden on scarce goods intensified, Irfan Habib depicted the agrarian economy becoming more exploitative. This triggered peasant uprisings, which wreaked havoc on imperial stability. The New Cambridge History of India takes the polar opposite of Habib's position.

Mughal decline is seen as the result of the success of the Mughal system, rather than its failure. It is said, for example, that the zamindars whose rebellions against the Mughals brought the latter's empire to an end were wealthy, not poor farmers, and were backed by wealthy merchants. This viewpoint, however, has yet to be validated by more evidence. The commonly held belief is that we are still in the midst of an economic crisis.

Stability of Mughal Traditions

The obstinate survival of the Mughal administration heritage stood in stark contrast to the Mughal empire's rapid territorial fragmentation. By 1761, the Mughal empire had become more of a state than an empire, and it may be best defined as the state of Delhi. However, the emperor's, the king of kings, reputation was so great that whether it was obtaining land, a throne, or an empire, the emperor's approval was sought. Even rebel chiefs of the Marathas and Sikhs sometimes recognized the emperor as the fountain head of power. In 1783, the Sikhs made offerings to the Delhi court (despite the fact that their gurus had been slain by the Mughals), and in 1714, the Maratha leader Shahu paid a visit to Aurangzeb's grave.

The British and the Maratha competed for control of the emperor's person in order to obtain legitimacy for their claims to the imperial throne. After the battle of Buxar, Shah Alam II was made a company pensioner, but he preferred the Marathas' protection in Delhi. In 1803 when the British took control of Delhi, he was once again under British protection. Local authorities followed Mughal administrative practises. It was only natural for the Mughal empire's successor nations to follow in the footsteps of their forefathers. Even nations that began as popular revolts against imperial rule, such as the Maratha, adopted Mughal administrative systems. Several officers schooled in Mughal practice establish employment in numerous local kingdoms.

Stability of Organizations Vs. Change in Structure

However, we should not conclude that the Mughal political system lasted because of the stability of organisations. None of the new polities could achieve an all-India level. Through local chiefs and then the British, some of the old organisations were reintegrated into new political institutions. Under colonialism, the traditional Mughal organisations performed completely different functions. Land revenue practices might be the same as earlier, but the wealth gathered was drained from India under colonialism. Imperialist historians distort this divide between form and function in order to emphasise organisational stability in order to show that the British were no different than their forefathers.

The Emergence of Local Political order

Beside with the decline of the Mughal empire, the second major theme of the 18th Century was the emergence of local political. Broadly there were three types of states which came into prominence: The states which broke absent from the Mughal empire, the new states set up by the rebels against the Mughal, and The self-governing states.

Successor States

Under the Mughals, regional rulers established self-governing states in Hyderabad, Bengal, and Awadh. The breakaway from Delhi occurred in stages — the revolt of individuals followed through that of the social groups, societies, and finally regions. The split was sparked by Zamindari revolts in the provinces against imperial demands. Governors were unable to gain support from the centre and had to rely on the support of local elites. However, linkages to the centre were maintained, as was Mughal practise.

Awadh and Hyderabad came to help the Mughals when Nadir Shah invaded Delhi. Provincial chiefs were typically powerful enough to rule the centre because of their ties to noble factions. As a result, rather than collapse, the changes in polity in this age can be better described as transition (to use Muzaffar Alam's phrase). Within the Mughal institutional framework, a new political order was created. The fall of the all-India polity did not result in a widespread economic downturn.

The local picture was very varied. The economy of Punjab was disturbed by foreign invasions, but the economy of Awadh grew. On his ascension, Safdar Jang, Nawab of Awadh, gave Rs. 3 crores to Nadir Shah. In Awadh, a stable polity grew up on the backs of economic prosperity, whereas the Punjabi states crumbled.

Hyderabad

Nizam-ul-death Mulk's in 1748 marked the end of a brilliant first chapter in Hyderabad's history. It all began in 1724 with the establishment of the state by Nizam-ul-Mulk, a famous nobleman at a time when the Saiyids controlled the Delhi court. He assisted Mohammed Shah in deposing the Saiyids and in return was given the office of Subadar of the Deccan.

He reorganized the administration and streamlined the revenue system. After a brief tenure as wazir at Delhi from 1722 to 1724, he returned to the Deccan to set up a state which was self-governing in practice, though he continued to declare allegiance to the Mughal emperor. The formation of local elite gave stability to this independence, as Karen Leonard has shown in her study of Hyderabad's political system. Reform in the revenue system, subduing of Zamindars, and tolerance towards Hindus were in the middle of his wise policies.

However, his death in 1748 left Hyderabad vulnerable to the Marathas and, later, international corporations. The Marathas invaded the state whenever they pleased and forced Chauth on the defenceless people. Nasir Jang, Nizam-ul-son, Mulk's and Muzaffar Jang, Nizam-ul-grandson, Mulk's fought a deadly succession battle. The French under Dupleix used this opportunity to play off one group against the other and supported Muzzaffar Jang, who gave them handsome monetary and territorial rewards.

Bengal

The rule of the Nawabs of Bengal was defined by independence in reality and allegiance in name to the authorities in Delhi. In 1717, Murshid Kuli Khan was appointed Governor of Bengal by the Mughals, although his relationship with Delhi was restricted to sending tribute. In 1727, Shuja-ud-din became Nawab and ruled until 1739, when Alivardi Khan took over. After his grandfather Alivardi Khan died in 1756, Siraj-ud-daula became the Nawab of Bengal.

The Bengal rulers did not discriminate on religious grounds in creation public appointments and Hindus reached high positions in the Civil Service and obtained lucrative zamindaris. The Nawabs were fiercely self-governing and maintained strict control in excess of the foreign companies trading in their realm. The French and English factories in Chandernagar and Calcutta were not authorised to build fortifications, and the Nawab refused to grant them special rights. Even when the British East India Company threatened to employ force to achieve its goals, the ruler's sovereignty was respected.

Though, the Nawabs suffered defeat at the hands of the British because of their weak and meager army and their under estimation of the danger posed through the company. The British victory at Plassey in 1757 inaugurated a new stage in British policies with India.

Awadh

Saadat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk slowly secured the independence of Awadh after his appointment as Governor in 1722. The main problem in Awadh was posed through the zamindars that not only refused to pay land revenue and behaved like autonomous chiefs with their forts and armies. Sadat Khan subdued them and introduced a new land resolution which provided protection to the peasants from the zamindars. The Jagirdari system was overhauled, and local gentry were awarded jagirdaris as well as positions in the administration and army. A "local ruling group" appeared, consisting of Shaikhzadas, Afghans and parts of the Hindus. The second group of local states were the 'new states' or 'insurgent states' set up through rebels against the Mughals—the Marathas, Sikhs, Jats and Afghans. The first three began as popular movements of peasant insurgency. The leadership was not with the nobility but with 'new men', often from lower orders, e.g., Hyder Ali, Sindhias, and Holkars.

Marathas

If the two main themes of the 18th century were decline of Mughal power and base of colonial rule, then a third theme was the rise and fall of local states, the mainly important in the middle of them being the Marathas. One all-India empire declined, a second one took its lay, and a third empire failed to approach into being. Mughal decline spanned the first part of the century; British ascendancy grew rapidly in the second half, and mainly of the terrain of the middle of the century was occupied through the swaying political fortunes of the Marathas.

The vital contours of the Maratha State system dominated through the Peshwas or chief ministers were evolved throughout the time of Balaji Vishwanath. He was a loyal official of Shahu, Shivaji's grandson, who was head of the Maratha, has after his release from custody in 1707. The powers of the office of the Peshwa rapidly increased throughout his tenure till it became the fountain head of power of the whole Maratha Empire.

Balaji Vishwanath died in 1720 and his son Baji Rao in 1740. By then the Marathas were no longer a local power but had attained the status of an expansionist empire. They had acquired control in excess of distant regions of the Mughal empire. The main weakness, though, was that these conquests were made at the initiative of the Maratha Chiefs who were unwilling to accept regulation from the Peshwa. These chiefs had accepted the Peshwa's power because of the military and financial benefit that accrued from this association. Collection of Chauth and Sardeshmukhi of a sure region was assigned to the chiefs and conquest permitted. These chiefs were only too willing to go in excess of to the other face, if the Peshwa exercised control in excess of their behaviors. This was the situation in Balaji Vishwanath's time.

Perhaps learning from this, Baji Rao himself led military campaigns and acquired the wealthy region of Malwa and Gujarat in the middle of others. Unfortunately, he got embroiled in disagreement with the other great power in the Deccan, Nizam-ul-Mulk. An alliance against the Mughal, and later the British, would have benefited both, but they chose to go in for alliances with even Mughal functionaries against each other. The Nizam was decisively beaten twice through Baji Rao's forces but the struggle for mastery flanked by the two sustained. When the British entered the fray, the battle became a triangular one, which benefited the British greatly because they could play one against the other. Balaji Rao, better recognized as Nana Saheb, was Peshwa from 1740 to 1761. Maratha power achieved its climax throughout his rule. Expansion was now no longer limited to regions in excess of Which the Mughal has an uncertain hold. No part of India was spared the depredations of Maratha conquest. The South proved relatively easier to subdue. Hyderabad Surrendered a big chunk of territory after its defeat in 1760 and Mysore and other states paid tribute. In the east, repeated

conquests of Bengal gained them Orissa in 1751. In Central India, Malwa, Gujarat and Rohilkhand, which had been conquered through Baja RAO, were integrated with the rest of the Martha empire.

Struggle flanked by Mughal, Marathas and Afghans

Mastery in excess of North India proved more hard to uphold after the initial easy conquest. The Mughal at Delhi came under Martha power but the Afghans under Abdali threw back the Marathas.

The Third Battle of Panipat, 1761

The third battle of Panipat commenced on 14th January 1761. But the disagreement and its outcome were brewing since 1752 when Maratha forces over ran North India and the Mughals recognized their power at the Delhi court. Imad-ul-Mulk was proclaimed Wazir of the Kingdom, although the Marathas ruled for all intents and purposes. The Marathas were not content with their acquisitions and looked greedily towards the Punjab, which was ruled through a tributary of Abdali. This was a grave mistake. Abdali had fled India after taking what he could with him. He left behind trusted followers in charge of Indus regions, but decided to return to challenge the ambitious Maratha power. The disagreement inevitably became a multifaceted one as the major and minor north Indian powers got drawn in. Here the Afghans were at an advantage as the Marathas had acquired several enemies in the procedure of conquering and administering this core region of the empire. The Mughal nobles, apart from Imad-ul-Mulk, had been defeated through them in the power game. The Jat and the Rajput chiefs were totally alienated through their conquests which were followed through imposition of heavy fines. The Sikhs, already frustrated in their effort to consolidate their power through the foreign invasions, were obviously in no mood to help the Marathas to annex Punjab in their empire.

The Rohilkhand chief and the Awadh Nawabs, whose region had been overrun by the Marathas, even went to the extent of joining hands with Abdali. The Maratha armies marched alone to the battlefield of Panipat to confront Abdali.

The Maratha army was no match for the Afghans. Though it boasted of troops trained on Western style. 28,000 Marathas died on the battlefield, beside with the commanders of the army, the Peshwa's minor son Vishwas Rao and the latter's cousin, Sadashiv Rao Bhau. The Peshwa, Balaji Baji Rao did not survive for long, after hearing the tragic news of the defeat.

Aftermath of the Third Battle of Panipat

The third battle of Panipat was crucial in the struggle for supremacy over India. The Marathas' aim to usurp the Mughals as imperial authority was thwarted at a critical juncture by this defeat. The British, rather than the Afghans, were the winners. The British were given a fantastic opportunity to consolidate their influence in Bengal and India. There was no turning back once they had gained these footholds. After the debacle of 1761, it appeared as if the Marathas' fortunes were rebounding for a short time.

In the north, the Rohilas, Rajput and Jat Chiefs, and in the south, Mysore and Hyderabad, Madhav Rao, who became Peshwa in 1761, were successful in subduing the old adversaries, the Rohilas, Rajput and Jat Chiefs. The Peshwa's early death in 1772, at the age of 28, put an end to the Marathas' ideal. The Maratha power was exposed to loss at the hands of the British in the first anglo-Maratha war as a result of a factional fight for supremacy.

Nature of the Maratha State and Movement

The rise of the Marathas was both a local reaction against Mughal centralization as well as a manifestation of the upward mobility of Backward classes and castes. The petty rural gentry and the hereditary cultivators shaped the social base. Officials desired to concentrate power in their hands, while peasant classes longed to gain Kshatriya status. Levy was become a legitimate feature of the Maratha state system by being formalised as chauth. Money was raised through chauth to supplement the income from the poor, underdeveloped regions of the Marathas. But reliance on plunder was an inadequacy of the Maratha system and they did not impose direct rule even when the rich regions of Carnatic, Coromandel and the Gangetic Valley came under their control.

The Marathas adopted some parts of the Mughal administrative system, but they concentrated attention on techniques of extracting surplus. The absence of an extensive administrative hierarchy or a well-defined provincial power prevented them from consolidating their power at a rapid pace, necessary before the Afghans and the British could defeat them. These administrative and financial weaknesses were compounded through their technological backwardness, especially in the military sphere.

The new development of the time, artillery, small arms, especially the flint guns and improved firearms were not adopted. The strategically located province of Punjab had witnessed the spread of an egalitarian, new religion, Sikhism, at the end of the 15th century. It was confined to the personal sphere for two centuries, but through the time of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, social survival and politics had transformed the adherents of this faith into a well-knit society. Guru Gobind Singh's disagreement with Aurangzeb is well recognized, as is Banda Bahadur's rebellion against Aurangzeb's successors.

The Mughals ruthlessly suppressed the revolt as Punjab was strategically crucial. The Sikhs, unlike other rebels, were not willing to compromise with the Mughals. They refused to have any link with the centre and insisted on being fully self-governing rulers. There were internal weaknesses too. The influence of the leaders of the movement, the Khatris, declined, as trade and urban centers withered under the combined impact

of the foreign invasions and the Marathas. With the promise of upward mobility, the movement drew in the lower castes, but this drew hostility from the upper castes and classes.

The Sikhs were quiet for a quarter-century after Banda Bahadur's insurrection was put down in 1715. However, the Mughal empire's hardship turned out to be a blessing in disguise for the Sikhs. The invasion of Nadir Shah and Abdali exposed north India, and the Sikhs looted everything they couldn't pillage and take away. On the foundation of this booty and taking advantage of the breakdown of imperial control in Punjab, the Sikhs rapidly reorganised their control once Abdali and his followers returned home.

There followed an era when 12 Misls or confederacies constituted the province. Recent scholarship has debunked the view that the Sikh political system was theocratic and placed it alongside secular politics elsewhere in the country. Punjab's rise to prominence had to wait till the end of the century for Ranjit Singh.

Jats

The Jats were an agriculturist Caste inhabiting the Delhi-Agra belt. In the latter half of the 17th century their revolts against Mughal power shook the stability of the core region of the Mughal empire. As Mughal control waned, Jat dominance expanded, and a peasant movement became an uprising that wiped out all other tribes in the region, including the Rajput Zamindars. Despite originating as a peasant rebellion, the Jat state remained feudal, with Zamindars holding both administrative and revenue powers and revenue demands under Suraj Mai were higher than under the Mughals.

Churaman and Badan Singh founded the Jat state at Bharatpur but it was Suraj Mal who consolidated Jat power throughout his rule from 1756 to 1763. Expansion of the state brought its boundaries to the Ganga in the east, the Chambal in the south, Delhi in the north and Agra in the west. In addition he possessed great administrative skill, especially in the meadows of revenue and civil affairs. His reign was brief, and his death in 1763 signalled the end of the Jat state as well.

Farukhabad and Rohilkhand

The Afghan migration in the 17th century resulted in the principalities of Rohilkhand and the kingdom of the Bangash Pathans. Large immigration of Afghans into India took place in mid-18th century because of political and economic disruption in Afghanistan. Ali Muhammad Khan took advantage of the collapse of power in north India following Nadir Shah's invasion, and set up a petty kingdom, Rohilkhand. The Rohilas, as the inhabitants of Rohilkhand were recognized, suffered heavily at the hands of the other powers in the region, the Jats and the Awadh rulers and later the Marathas and the British. Mohammad Khan Bangash, an Afghan, had set up a self-governing kingdom to the east of Delhi in the region approximately around Farrukhabad.

The Afghani Use of artillery, especially the flint gun, ended the power of cavalry since the early medieval ages. Politically the role of the Afghans was based upon self-preservation. They not only accentuated the Mughals' decline, but they also assisted Abdali in subduing Awadh, which may have stifled British advance.

Self-governing Kingdoms

There was a third type of state which was neither the result of a breakaway from or rebellion against Delhi. Mysore, the Rajput states and Kerala fall in this category.

Mysore

The mid-18th century witnessed the emergence of Mysore as an important power in South India. Haidar Ali laid the foundations of Mysore's power, which were consolidated through his able son, Tipu Sultan. Though Haidar Ali was only a junior officer, of general parentage, in the Mysore army, he slowly rose to be a brilliant commander. His mainly extra ordinary attainment was his realization that only a contemporary army could be the foundation of a powerful state. Consequently, he inducted French experts to set up an arsenal and train the troops based on western style. Soon after he was able to overthrow the real power behind the Mysore throne, the minister Nunjaraj in 1761.

The boundaries of the Mysore state extended to contain the rich coastal regions of Karnataka and Malabar. An expansionist at heart, Haidar naturally clashed with other powers in the region, the Marathas, Hyderabad and the new entrants in the game, the British. In 1769, he inflicted a heavy defeat on British forces near Madras. When Tipu became Sultan after his father's death in 1782, he continued his father's policies. Tipu's rule, on the other hand, is outside the scope of this Unit.

Rajputs

The Rajput kings did not waste any time in cementing their position by taking advantage of the Mughal empire's downfall. None were big enough to contend with the Marathas or the British for the position of paramount power. Their idea was to slowly loosen their ties with Delhi and function as self-governing states in practice. They took part in the power struggle at the Mughal emperors' court in Delhi, where they obtained wealthy and prestigious governorships.

Rajput policy continued to be fractured in the post Mughal era. All the states followed a policy of constant expansion absorbing weak neighbours whenever possible. This took lay within the State too, with one faction ousting the other in a continuously played game of one-up-manship at the court of the Mughals. The mainly well-recognized Rajput ruler, Jai Singh of Amber, ruled Jaipur from 1699 to 1743.

Kerala

The present-day state of Kerala was formed by the merger of the three states of Cochin, Travancore, and Calicut. By 1763, these republics had absorbed the lands of a large number of chiefs and rajas. However, Mysore's expansion was detrimental to Kerala's stabil-

ity. In 1766, Haidar Ali invaded Kerala, annexing Malabar and Calicut.

Travancore, the southern mighty state and geographically distant was the only prominent state which was spared. Travancore had gained in importance after 1729 when its King, Martanda Verma, expanded his dominions with the help of a strong and contemporary army trained in Western style and well equipped with contemporary weapons. The Dutch were ousted from Kerala and the feudal chiefs were suppressed. His ambition went beyond expansion to include the development of his state, including irrigation, transportation, and communication. Rama Verma, his successor, was responsible for the establishment of Trivandrum, the capital, as a centre of education and art. He was a man of remarkable inventiveness and learning, including Western knowledge.

Weaknesses of Local Polities

These states were strong enough to destroy Mughal power but none was able to replace it through a stable polity at an all-India stage. This was because of some inherent weaknesses in their local politics. Though some, such as Mysore, attempted to modernise, they were, on the whole, scientifically and technologically underdeveloped. These states could not reverse the common economic stagnation which had plagued the Mughal economy. The Jagirdari crisis intensified as income from agriculture declined and the number of contenders for a share of the surplus multiplied. Trade, internal and foreign sustained without disruption and even prospered but the rest of the economy stagnated. The analysis of these weaknesses has been questioned by the historians recently. Some representative examples will illustrate a dissimilar trend. Satish Chandra argues that it is wrong to talk of generalized economic decline and social stagnation. The resilience of the economy was in sharp contrast to the pace with which the polity collapsed. For instance, Bengal withstood the ravages of early colonial rule very well. Bengal's economy stabilized after the 1770s and export of cotton piece goods went up to 2 million in the 1790s from 400,000 in the 1750s.

The social structure did not stagnated, it changed and the upward mobility of the low castes and "new men" was a general characteristic of India.

Muzaffar Alam presents a regionally varied picture, with some regions (Awadh) experiencing economic prosperity and other regions stagnation (Punjab). Politics remained local because there appeared no state system indigenously with enough surpluses for an all-India system comparable to the Mughal empire.

The Rise of British Power

The third and the mainly crucial characteristic of the 18th century polity was the rise and expansion of the British power in India. It opened a new stage in the history of India. This part will let us know how the British came to India and subsequently expanded their power.

From Trading Company to Political Power

The mid-18th century saw the transformation of the English East India Company from trading enterprises to a political power. From its establishment on 31 December 1600 to 1744, the English East India Company slowly expanded its trade and influence in India. The Portuguese and Dutch were eased out through a strategy combining war and maneuvers at the Mughal court. Through the 18th century the main foreign power remaining in the fray was the French East India Company, a comparatively late entrant in the race. The beginning of the empire is usually traced to 1757, when the British defeated the Bengal Nawab at Plassey. The ground for the victory of 1757 was laid in South India where British military might and diplomatic strategy were successfully tested out vis-a-vis the French Company. The conflict, popularly recognized as the Carnatic Wars, spanned a quarter century from 1744 to 1763.

The English East India Company had remained a commercial body for one and a half centuries. Why did it acquire its political ambitions at this time? The expansion of European manufacture and trade and the emergence of aggressive nation states in Europe lay behind the expansion of the European companies in India from the 1730s. In India, the decline of Mughal power obviously provided a great opportunity for expansion of power.

The company's need for more revenue from taxation inclined it towards establishing an empire. The company needed money to uphold its trade and pay its The apparent approach of achieving this demand seems to be the purchase of territory. The firm had two goals in mind when it came to conquering Bengal. Protection of its trade and control in excess of Bengal's revenue. The goal was to remit Bengal's surplus money as tribute through the conduit of Bengal goods investment.

Anglo-French Struggle in South India

Hyderabad had become self-governing of central power under Nizam-ul-Mulk but after his death in 1748, it entered into an era of great instability, as did the Carnatic. Disputes of succession offered the foreign companies a chance for intervention.

First Carnatic War

The First Carnatic War was provoked through the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in 1742. By 1745, the war spread to India where French and English East India Companies were rivals in trade and political power. The English attack of French ships close to Pondicherry was duly matched through the French response in Madras. The Nawab of Carnatic replied to an English petition to preserve Madras, and his soldiers were destroyed by a tiny French army near Madras. Hostilities in India ceased with the end of the European war, although only for a short time. The question of primacy had not been definitively resolved, and a state of contention arose from 1748 onwards.

The Second Carnatic War

The second war was the outcome of the diplomatic efforts of Dupleix, the French Governor-general in India. Disputes in excess of claims to the throne arose both in Hyderabad and in the Carnatic. Dupleix was quick to extend support to Chanda Sahib in the Carnatic and Muzaffar Jang in Hyderabad, with the intention of obtaining handsome rewards from them. This early preparation was useful as the French and their allies defeated their opponents in 1749. The French gained territorially and monetarily. Important gains were the Northern Sarkars, Masulipatnam and some villages near Pondicherry. Political powers was secured at the Nizam's court through the appointment of an agent at the court.

The English avenged their defeat in 1750. Robert Clive master minded the battle of Arcot with only 200 English and 300 Indian soldiers. Chanda Sahib had no option but to rush to the defense of his capital, lifting the siege of Trichinopoly and releasing Muhammad Ali in consequence. This was what Clive had hoped would happen.

The French effort to strike back was frustrated through the lack of support given through the French government. They had incurred heavy losses in America and India and preferred a humiliating peace to an expensive disagreement. Thus the very nature of the company, it's being approximately a department of the state, pre... disastrous for it. The French state was not only cor... rupt and decadent, it failed to stay in row with cu...nt growths and visions into the future. Duplei... called after negotiations with the English Co...pany in 1754. The French challenge was virtually end...

Third Carnatic War

A third war broke out in 1756, with the co... ment of war in Europe. Count de Lally sailed to India to aid the French army but his ships were sent back and the French troops were defeated in Carnatic. The French presence at the court and territory in Hyderabad state were taken away by the English. The battle of Wandiwash in 1760 marked the elimination of French power in India.

Peace like war was once again connected with Europe. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 reduced the French company to a pure trading body without any political privileges.

The disagreement flanked by the English and French companies was a crucial stage in the consolidation of British power in India. At the end, the superiority of the British over the French was clearly proved. The lessons learnt in the Carnatic were well applied in other parts of the country.

Conquest of Bengal : Plassey to Buxar

Bengal was the first province where the British recognized political control. The Nawab, Siraj-ud-daula, was defeated at the battle of Plassey in 1757. The grant of the Zamindari of 24 Parganas by Mir Jafar in 1757 and then of the Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong in 1760 by Mir Kasim gave the Company's servants the opportunity to oppress the officials of the Nawab and the peasants. Trading privileges were likewise misused. Mir Kasim followed Siraj-ud-daula's instance and refused to accept these attacks on his sovereignty. He joined battle with the British at Buxar in 1764 along with the Nawab of Awadh and the Mughal emperor. The company won an easy victory.

Dual Government

The treaty of Bengal in 1765 inaugurated the Dual Government of Bengal. Clive became Governor of Bengal and Company, the virtual ruler. The Nawab was the ruler merely in name as his army had been disbanded. The administration was handed over to the Deputy Subadar, who would function on behalf of the Nawab, but would be nominated through the company. The company had direct control in process of collection of revenues through the Deputy diwan. As the offices of diwan and subadar were held through the same person, the company's control was total.

Moreover, the great advantage was that responsibility remained to be with the Nawab. The blame for the extortions and oppression through the company's servants fell on the Nawab. It is estimated that Rs. 5.7 million were taken from Bengal in the years 1766 to 1768 alone. Senior British officials including Clive ad...itted that Company's rule was unjust and corrupt and ...ant untold misery for the people of Bengal.

Reorganisation of the Political System

The ...ministrative abuses were so great that the company ...ded the dual government in 1772. The company w... essentially a trading corporation, ill equipped to ad...nister territory. Changes were necessary in the cons...tion to enable it to wield political power and for the British Government to regulate the functioning of the company. This was affected through the Regulating Act of 1773.

Introduction of Western Organizations

The significance of the Regulating Act lies in its introduction of the British mode of governance. British style organizations were introduced. The Governor-General and his council were to run the administration of Bengal and supervise that of Bombay and Madras. The Supreme Court of justice was set up at Calcutta to administer justice just as to British percepts. The nucleus of administrative tools already lived within the company, as it had an army, imposed taxes and imparted justice. Initially the old system was only extended, but through the turn of the century, British principles had permeated deep.

One such principle was the separation of the judiciary from the executive. Civil courts set up and presided by judges, proved popular. 200,000 cases per year being the average in the early nineteenth century. The police system took form under Cornwallis. Both the Nawab and his subordinates lost power as the company became the supreme power. The powerful state tools cre-