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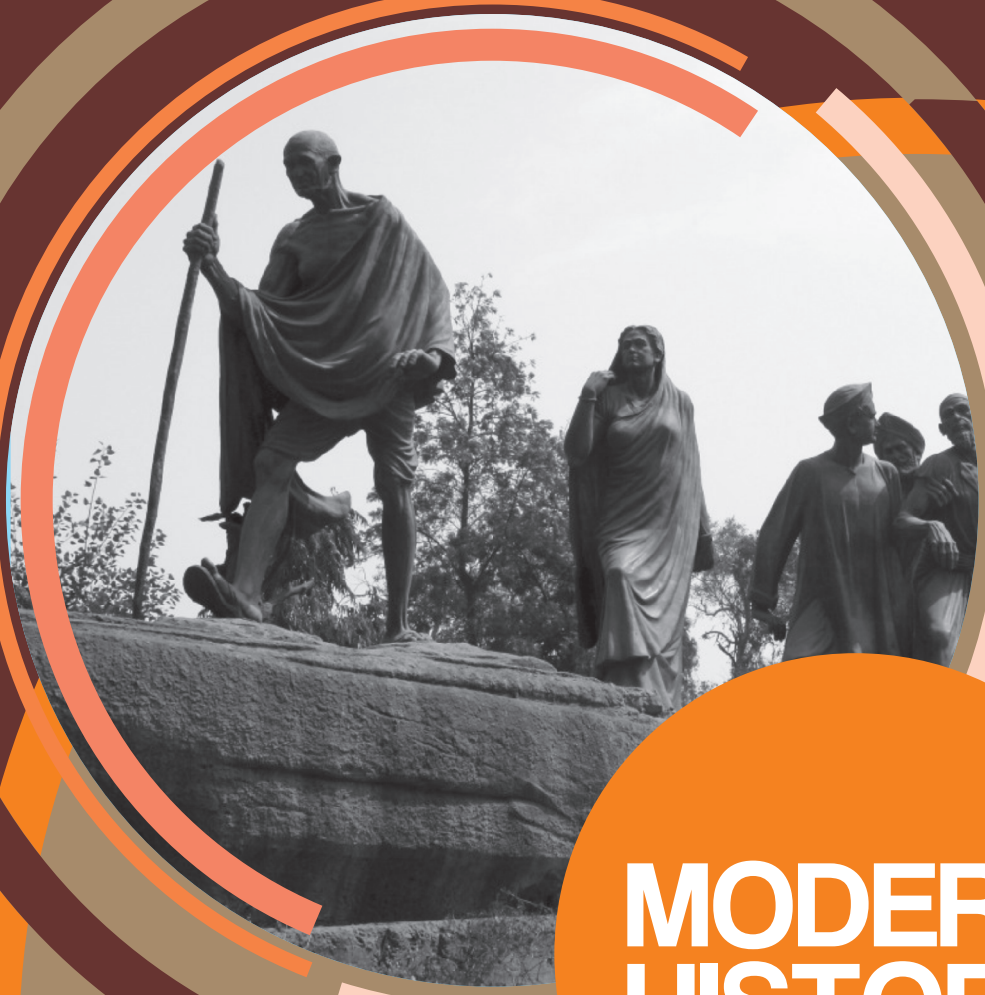


MODERN HISTORY

for Civil Servies Examination

Contents

1.
BRITISH CONQUEST OF INDIA

India in the 18th Century

The eighteenth century in India was characterized by two critical transitions that altered the structure of power and initiated important social and economic changes. The first was the transition in the first half of the century from the Mughal Empire to the regional political orders. The second was the transition in the polity, society, and economy. In the 18th century, the English East India Company steered its way to the position of political dominance. As the heydays of the Mughal power started fading away it started providing space to the emergence of the regional states.

The 18th century along with the decline of Mughal authority witnessed a resurgence of regional identity that buttressed both political and economic decentralization. Both intraregional, as well as interregional trade in local raw materials, artefacts, and grains, created and consolidated strong ties of economic interdependence, irrespective of political and military relations.

The decline of the Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire held sway over a large part of India for nearly three centuries, but a drastic decline in its power and prestige came about by the first half of the eighteenth century. Not only did the political boundaries of the Empire shrink, but the decline also saw the collapse of the administrative structure so assiduously built by rulers like Akbar and Shah Jahan. In the wake of the collapse of the Mughal power, a number of Independent principalities emerged in all parts of the Empire.

Political Causes

- The unity and stability of the Mughal Empire were shaken during the long and strong reign of Emperor Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb inherited a large empire, yet he adopted a policy of extending it further to the farthest geographical limits in the south at the great expense of men and materials. After the death of Aurangzeb the Mughal authority weakened, it was not in a position to militarily enforce its regulations in all parts of the empire.
- Aurangzeb's futile but arduous campaign against the Marathas extended over many years; it drained the resources of his Empire and ruined the trade and industry of the Deccan.
- Alliance with the Rajput rajas with the consequent military support was one of the main pillars of Mughal strength in the past, but Aurangzeb's conflict with some of the Rajput states also had serious consequences.
- In the 18th century, Maratha's expansion in the north weakened central authority still further.

- The strength of Aurangzeb's administration was challenged at its very nerve centre around Delhi by the Jat, and the Sikh uprisings. All of them were to a considerable extent the result of the oppression of the Mughal revenue officials over the peasantry. It showed that the peasantry was deeply dissatisfied with feudal oppression by Zamindars, nobles, and the state.

Religious Causes

- Aurangzeb's religious orthodoxy and his policy towards the Hindu rulers seriously damaged the stability of the Mughal Empire. Its stability was essentially founded on the policy of non-interference with the religious beliefs and customs of the people, fostering friendly relations between Hindus and Muslims.
- Aurangzeb imposed the jizyah (tax imposed on non-Muslim people), destroyed many of the Hindu temples in the north, and put certain restrictions on the Hindus.

Wars of Succession & Civil Wars

- In the absence of any fixed rule of succession, the Mughal dynasty was always plagued after the death of a king by a civil war between the princes. The sword and not the principle of Justice became the grand arbiter of right. It not only ruined the prestige and morale of the Mughals but also gave wide scope to the disturbing elements to take undue advantages of it.
- The wars of succession became extremely fierce and destructive during the 18th century and resulted in great loss of life and property. Thousands of trained soldiers and hundreds of capable military commanders and efficient and tried officials were killed. Moreover, these civil wars loosened the administrative fabric of the Empire.

Nobility

- The weakness of the king could have been successfully overcome and covered up by an alert, efficient, and loyal nobility. But the character of the nobility had also deteriorated. Many nobles lived extravagantly and beyond their means. Many of them became ease-loving and fond of excessive luxury.
- Earlier, many able persons from the lower classes had been able to rise to the ranks of nobility, thus infusing fresh blood into it. Later, the existing families of nobles began to monopolies all offices, barring the way to fresh comers.
- Not all the nobles, however, bad become weak and inefficient. A large number of energetic and able officials and brave and brilliant military commanders came into prominence during the 18th century like Alivardi Khan, but most of them did not benefit the Empire because they used their talents to promote their own interests and to fight each other rather than to serve the state and society.
- The growing selfishness and lack of devotion of Nobles to the state and this, in turn, gave birth to corruption in administration and mutual bickering. In order to increase emperors' power, prestige, and income, the nobles formed groups and factions against each other and even against the king. In their struggle for power, they took recourse to force, fraud, and treachery. The mutual quarrels exhausted the Empire, affected its cohesion, led to its dismemberment, and, in the end, made it easy prey to foreign conquerors.

Foreign Invasion

- A series of foreign invasions affected the Mughal Empire very badly. Attacks by Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali, which were themselves the consequences of the weakness of the Empire, drained the Empire of its wealth, ruined its trade and industry in the North, and almost destroyed its military power.
- The emergence of the British challenge took away the last hope of the revival of the crisis-ridden Empire.

Mansabdari and the Jagirdari crisis

The nobles in the Mughal Empire were the core state officials. They were given ranks corresponding to their status in the Mughal official hierarchy. These ranks were called mansab. Each holder of a mansab, called mansabdar, was paid in assignments of land revenue called jagir.

- **Mansab denoted three things:**
  - It determined the status of its holder (the mansabdar) in the official hierarchy.
  - It fixed the pay of the holder.
  - It also laid upon the holder the obligation of maintaining a specified number of contingents with horses and equipment. These troopers were paid and maintained out of the revenue of the jagir. They formed the base of the mansabdar's power and assisted him in the collection of land revenue.
- Availability of the revenues to be assigned and the ability of the Mughals to collect them thus became two crucial pre-requisites for the effective working of the system. Mughal decline has to be seen in the failure, towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign, to maintain the system of the Mansabdar-Jagirdar. As this system went into disarray, the Empire was bound to collapse.
- The sudden increase in the number of nobles caused due to the expansion of the Empire into the Deccan and Maratha territory created a crisis in the functioning of the jagir system. the nobles competed for better jagir, which was increasingly becoming rare due to the influx of nobles from the south. The logical consequence was the erosion in the political structure which was based on jagirdari system to a large extent.
- The mechanism of collection of revenue that the Mughals had evolved was inherently flawed. The imperial policy was to set the revenue at the highest rate possible to secure the greatest military strength for the Empire. The nobles, on the other hand, tended to squeeze the maximum from their jagirs, even if it ruined the peasantry and destroyed the revenue paying capacity of the area. Since the nobles 'jagirs were liable to be transferred frequently, they did not find it necessary to follow a far-sighted policy of agricultural development.

As the burden on the peasantry increased, they were often deprived of their very means of survival. In many areas, the peasants took to flight. Entire villages were left deserted due to the large scale migration of peasants to the towns or other villages. Very often the peasants protested against the state by refusing to pay the revenue and were up in arms against the Mughals.

The Mughal system continued even long after the de facto demise of the empire, which was followed by the emergence of a number of regional powers. The eighteenth century in Indian history is not a dark age, nor the age of overall decline. The decline of one pan-Indian empire was followed by the rise of another, the intervening period being dominated by a variety of powerful regional states.

List of later Mughal Emperors

Name	Reign	Notes
Bahadur Shah	19 June 1707 – 27 February 1712	He made settlements with the Marathas, tranquilised the Rajputs, and became friendly with the Sikhs in the Punjab.
Jahandar Shah	27 February 1712 – 11 February 1713	Highly influenced by his Grand Vizier Zulfikar Khan
Farrukhsiyar	11 January 1713 – 28 February 1719	Granted a firman to the East India Company in 1717 granting them duty-free trading rights for Bengal, strengthening their posts on the east coast. The firman or decree helped British East India company to import goods into Bengal without paying customs duty to the government.
Rafi ud-Darajat	28 February – 6 June 1719	Rise of Syed Brothers as power brokers.
Shah Jahan II	6 June 1719 – 17 September 1719	-
Muhammad Shah	27 September 1719 – 26 April 1748	Got rid of the Syed Brothers. Fought a long war with the Marathas, losing Deccan and Malwa in the process. Suffered the invasion of Nader Shah of Persia in 1739. He was the last emperor to possess effective control over the empire.

Ahmad Shah Bahadur	29 April 1748 – 2 June 1754	Mughal forces defeated by the Marathas at the Battle of Sikandarabad.
Alamgir II	3 June 1754 – 29 November 1759	Domination of Vizier Imad-ul-Mulk.
Shah Jahan III	10 December 1759 – 10 October 1760	Consolidation of power by the Nawab of Bengal-Bihar-Odisha.
Shah Alam II	10 October 1760 – 19 November 1806	Defeat in the Battle of Buxar.
Muhammad Shah Bahadur Jahan IV	31 July 1788 – 11 October 1788	Enthroned as a puppet Emperor by the Rohilla Ghulam Qadir, following the temporary overthrow of Shah Alam
Akbar Shah II	19 November 1806 – 28 September 1837	Titular figurehead under British protection.
Bahadur Shah II	28 September 1837 – 21 September 1857	Last Mughal Emperor. Deposed by the British and was exiled to Burma after the Indian Rebellion of 1857.

The Rise of Regional Polities and States

The states that arose in India during the phase of Mughal decline and the following century (roughly 1700 to 1850) varied greatly in terms of resources, longevity, and essential character. These powers challenged the British attempt at supremacy in Indiainthe second half of the 18th century. Some arose as a result of the assertion of autonomy by governors of Mughal provinces; others were theproduct of rebellion against Mughal authority.

Successor States

The founders of these states were important Mughal nobles and held high Mansabs. Though they became independent, they never broke formal ties with the Mughal state. Some of the important states in this category are Awadh, Bengal, and Hyderabad.

Awadh

The founder of the autonomous kingdom of Avadh was Burhan-ul-Mulk Saadat Khan who was appointed Governor of Avadh in 1722. He was an extremely bold, energetic, Iron-willed, and intelligent person. Awadh was a prosperous region, controlling the rich alluvial Ganga plain and the main trade route between North India and Bengal. Saadat Khan had to wage war upon rebellious Zamindars who refused to pay the land tax. The Big zamindars organized their own private armies, erected forts and defied the Imperial rule of Saadat Khan.

In order to consolidate his position, Sadat Khan adopted the following measures:

- Suppression of rebellious local zamindars and chieftains;
- Systematizing, revenue, collection; and
- Negotiation with some local zamindars.

Under the new revenue system, the right to collect tax was sold to the highest bidders. They were known as "revenue farmers" who agreed to pay the state a fixed sum of money. The state depended on local bankers and mahajans for loans. Local bankers also guaranteed the payment of revenue contracted amount to the state. In turn, the revenue-farmers were given considerable freedom in the assessment and collection of taxes. These developments allowed new social groups, like moneylenders and bankers, to influence the management of the state's revenue system.

Safdar Jang organized an equitable system of Justice. He adopted a policy of impartiality in the employment of Hindus and Muslims. He too did not discriminate between Hindus and Muslims. Many of his commanders and high officials were Hindus.

Before his death in 1739, he had become virtually independent and had made the province a hereditary possession. He was succeeded by his nephew Safdar Jang.

Bengal

In Bengal, the process of autonomy was started by Murshid Quli Khan. Even though he was made Governor of Bengal as late as 1717, he had been its effective ruler since 1700, when he was appointed its Dewan. He soon freed himself from central control though he sent regular tribute to the Emperor. Murshid Quli abolished the separate offices of the diwan and the Nazim and combined them into one. His initial concern was revenue administration and, in order to streamline it, he took the following 'measures:

- Elimination of small intermediary zamindars as they were unable to meet the demands of revenue and were forced to sell their lands to larger zamindars.
- Expelling rebellious zamindars and jagirdars to the frontier regions of Orissa and ordered a major reassessment of the revenues of Bengal.
- Encouraging big zamindars who assumed the responsibilities of revenue collection and payment;
- Enlarging the scope and extent of the khalisa lands. (The revenue-yielding land administered directly by the imperial Revenue Department was known as khalisa. Ordinarily, the most fertile and easily administered lands were brought within the khalisa.)

Murshid Quli encouraged the zamladars to emerge as a powerful political force in the province. Similarly, moneylender and commercial classes got encouragement from the Nawab and established their importance in the local polity. Nawabs of Bengals gave equal opportunities for employment to Hindus and Muslims. They filled the highest civilian posts and many of the military posts with Bengalis, most of whom were Hindus. Murshid Quli Khan gave preference to local zamindars and mahajans (money-lenders) who were mainly Hindus for the task of revenue collection. He thus laid the foundations of a new landed aristocracy in Bengal.

Murshid Quli also nominated his daughter's son Sarfaraz as his successor. This set the tradition of a dynastic rule in Bengal. The next ruler Alivardi Khan assumed power through a coup and killed Sarfaraz Khan. Alivardi's reign showed further development of autonomy. Major appointments at the provincial level were made by him without any reference to the Mughal ruler Thus, by Alivardi's time, an administrative system developed in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa which reduced ties with the imperial court in Delhi, and for all practical purposes an independent state emerged in Eastern India.

Hyderabad

The State of Hyderabad was founded by Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah in 1724. From 1722 to 1724 hewas the Wazir of the Empire. But he soon got disgusted with that office as Emperor Muhammad Shah frustrated all his attempts at reforming the administration. So he decided to go back to the Deccan where he could safely maintain his supremacy.

Asaf Jah brought skilled soldiers and administrators from northern India who welcomed the newopportunities in the south. He appointed mansabdars and granted jagirs. Although he was still a servant of the Mughal emperor, he ruled quite independently without seeking any direction from Delhi or facing any interference. He established his control over Hyderabad by removing the officials appointed by the Mughals and installed his own men. He assumed the right of making treaties, wars, granting mansabs, titles, etc. The Mughal authority was reduced to a symbolic authority as he never openly declared his independence from the Central Government.

Reform of the revenue system, subduing of zamindars and tolerance towards Hindus were some of his important measures. Bankers, moneylenders and military commanders had an important role to play in maintaining political balance because they provided the essential financial and military service. Nizamulmulk's reign thus showed the emergence of an independent state in Hyderadad withnominal allegiance to the emperor. His successors faced tough challenges from the Marathas and the European Companies and failed to maintain the autonomy of the state for long.

The New States

The second group of regional states was the 'new states' which came into existence as a protest against the Mughals.It included states under the control of Marathas, Sikhs and others like the Jats.These regional states also are known as 'insurgent states' were set up by rebels against the Mughals.

The Marathas

Among the various provincial states that emerged during this period, the most prominent was the Maratha state. The rise of the Marathas was both a regional reaction against Mughal centralization as well as a manifestation of the upward mobility of certain classes and castes. Groups of highly mobile, peasant pastoralists (kunbis) provided the backbone of the Maratha army. Shivaji (1627-1680) carved out a stable Maratha kingdom with the support of powerful warrior families. Shivaji's military conquests made him a legendary figure in the Maratha region. Many came forward to join his army.

After Shivaji's death, effective power in the Maratha state was wielded by a family of Chitpavan Brahmanas who served Shivaji's successors as Peshwa (or principal minister). Poona became the capital of the Maratha kingdom. During the period of Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath, the office of the Peshwa became very powerful and the Maratha state system attained the status of a dominant expansionist state.

Under the Peshwas, the Marathas developed a very successful military organization. Their success lay in bypassing the fortified areas of the Mughals, by raiding cities and by engaging Mughal armies in areas where their supply lines and reinforcements could be easily disturbed.

Marathas were recognized as the overlord of the entire Deccan peninsula. They levied chauth and sardeshmukhi in the entire region.

- Chauth was the tax which the small kingdoms or Dynasties had to pay to Marathas in order to protect their territory from being invaded and conquered by the Maratha army. Chauth (one-fourth) was an annual tax nominally levied at 25% on revenue or produce and based on the might.
- Sardeshmukhi was an additional 10% tax on Chauth which was collected only to maintain the hereditary right of Marathas on the Tax collection processes.

  The Third Battle of Panipat in 1761 between the Afghans and the Marathas was major setback for the Marathas and their victory march was halted by the success of the Afghans in this battle. Marathas' expansion brought enormous resources, but it came at a price. Thee military campaigns made other rulers hostile towards the Marathas. As a result, they were not inclined to support the Marathas during the third battle of Panipat in 1761.

Punjab

The strategically located province of Punjab had witnessed the spread of a democratic, new religion, Sikhism, at the end of the 15th century. It was confined to the personal sphere for two centuries, but by the time of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, political ambitions and militancy had transformed the adherents of this faith into a well-knit community. Guru Gobind Singh's conflict with Aurangzeb is well known, 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 center and insisted on being fully independent rulers. There were internal weaknesses too. The position 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. The movement had drawn in the lower castes with the prospect of upward mobility, but this invited the opposition of the upper castes and classes. For a quarter-century after the suppression of Banda Bahadur's rebellion in 1715, the Sikhs were quiescent. But adversity for the Mughal empire proved to be a beneficial opportunity for the Sikhs.

The invasion of Nadir Shah and Abdali exposed north India and what they could not plunder and take away was looted by the Sikhs. On the basis of this booty and taking advantage of the breakdown of imperial control of Punjab, the Sikhs rapidly established their control once Abdali and his followers returned home.

The foreign invasion (Persian and Afghan), the Maratha incursion and internal rivalry in the provincial administration created a very fluid situation in Punjab which helped the Sikhs to consolidate their base. In the second half of the 18th century, the different Sikh groups had regrouped themselves into 12 larger regional confederacies or misls under the leadership of various local chieftains. The process towards the establishment of an autonomous state became complete only under Ranjit Singh at the beginning of the 19th century.

The Jat State

The Jats were an agriculturist caste inhabiting the Delhi-Agra region. Among the different agrarian revolts that the Mughal Empire faced in the second half of the 17th century, the revolt of the Jats was a significant one. Following the contemporary trend, the Jats also tried to establish an autonomous zone of their control. Churaman and Badan Singh took the initiative but it was Suraj Mal who consolidated the Jat state at Bharatpur from 1756-1763. The state was expanded in the east up to the boundaries of the Ganga, in the south the Chambal, in the north Delhi and in the west Agra.The Jat state suffered a decline after the death of Suraj Mal in 1763. Thereafter, the state split into small areas controlled by petty zamindars who mainly lived by plunder.

Independent Kingdoms

These states had already enjoyed a lot of independence during the Mughal rule. The autonomous chiefs of these stated were granted watan jagirs (hereditary and non-transferable land). These states emerged neither as the result of a breakaway from or rebellion against Delhi.Mysore, the Rajput states and Kerala fall in this category.

Mysore

The kingdom of Mysore was located to the south of Hyderabad. Unlike Hyderabad, Mysore was not under direct control of the Mughals. Mysore was transformed from a viceroyalty of the Vijaynagar Empire into an autonomous state by the Wodeyar dynasty. The Wodeyar rulers were overthrown to strengthen the autonomy of the state by Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan during the 18th century. The major threat before Mysore initially came from the Marathas on the one hand and that of Hyderabad on the other, while the English were waiting to take advantage of the situation.

Starting his career as a junior officer in the Mysore anny, Haidar Ali became its brilliant commander. He rightly realized the importance of modern army and accordingly tried 'to modernize the Mysore army after the European manner. With the help of the French, he tried to strengthen organizational discipline in the army. By 1761, he was able to capture the real power of the Mysore. He extended the boundaries of the Mysore state and incurred the hostilities of the Marathas, Hyderabad and the English. In 1769, the British forces were defeated by Haidar Ali. But the conflict continued. After his death in 1782, his son Tipu Sultan carried on the task of his father tillsthe, end of the 18th century.

The Rajputs

The Rajput rulers did not lag behind in consolidating their position by taking advantage of the disintegration of the Mughal Empire. None were large enough to contend with the Marathas or the British for the position of a paramount power. Their method was to slowly loosen their ties with Delhi and function as independent states in practice. They participated in the struggle for power at the court of Delhi and gained lucrative and influential governorships from the Mughal emperors.

The Rajput policy continued to be fractured in the post-Mughal period. All the states followed a policy of constant expansion absorbing weak neighbors whenever possible. This took place 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 principal Rajput states like Mewar, Marwar, and Amber formed a league against the Mughals. But the internal rivalry among the Rajputs for power weakened their authority. Most prominent among the Rajput rulers were Ajit Singh of Jodhpur and Jai Singh of Jaipur. At one time the Rajputs controlled the entire territory extending from the south of Delhi up to the western coast.

Kerala

Kerala was divided into small principalities under the control of local chieftains and rajas at the beginning of the 18th century. Mughal control was not visible in this area. But by the second half of the 18th century, all small principalities had been subdued by the important states of Kerala, Cochin, Travancore, and Calicut. The expansion of Mysore under Haidar Ali put Kerala in a very difficult situation. Haidar Ali in fact annexed Malabar and Calicut. Travancore, which escaped from Haidar Ali's invasion, was the most prominent one. It was king Martanda Varma who extended the boundaries of Travancore from Kanya Kumari to Cochin. He tried to organize the army along the Western Model and took various administrative measures to develop the state.

Nature of Regional Polities

There were differences in the way the autonomous political system developed in different regions. In some areas, the Mughal governors established their independent authority in the regions under their control (as it happened in Bengal, Awadh, and Hyderabad). The formation of the Maratha, Sikh and Jat states was the outcome of their struggle against the Mughal imperial control whereas Mysore, Rajputana, and Kerala were already semi-independent. But the link that they had maintained with the Mughal Empire was broken in the wake of the decline of the Mughal Empire. In whatever manner these states emerged, they tried to develop its own administrative mechanism.

The independent political system that emerged in the provinces continued to maintain ties with the Mughal imperial authority. Though the Mughal Emperor lost its earlier control over the provincial administration, its importance as an umbrella, over the provincial authority still remained. The newly emerged regional powers acknowledged this importance. Even rebel chieftains of the Marathas and Sikhs sometimes recognized the Emperor as the supreme authority. Each state no doubt reorganized its administrative setup and army according to its requirements, but the Mughal administrative system was often adopted by these states. In the states like Bengal, Awadh, and Hyderabad, where the Mughal governors had established their independent authority, it was quite natural to follow the Mughal tradition. Even states like that of the Marathas adopted a Mughal pattern of administration. However, it should be noted in this context that though there was continuity of some Mughal institutions, the Mughal political system did not survive. The polity that emerged in the early 18th century was regional in character.

The regional polity that emerged in the 18th century worked with the collaborative support of the different local groups like the zamindars, merchants, local nobles, and chieftains. With the weakening of the imperial authority and the finances in the 18th century, the merchants played a crucial role in the emergence and functioning of the regional polity. They provided the necessary financial support to the nobles and rulers and naturally had important say in the administration. For example, the house of the Jagat Seths in Bengal played decisive role in the local power politics. Like the merchants, the zamindars and local chieftains in the absence of central security emerged as protectors of the local people. In their respective areas of control, the zamindars ruled over both revenues as well as judicial administration. The common people had to depend on the mercy and benevolence of these zamindars. Naturally in the newly-formed regional polity, these zamindars had strong local clout. The provincial rulers had to take care of these various local interests in order to maintain themselves.

In the 18th century regional polity, local groups often played a decisive role in the administration. This can be regarded as one of the weaknesses of the regional polity. This shows that the provincial ruler's financial administrative and military organization were not so robust to sustain the growing urges and aspirations of local rulers. So they had to depend on the cooperation and collaboration of the local groups. This was a major administrative flaw in the provincial polity and to some extent this was one reason for the failure of developing a stable polity. Another drawback was the constant warfare among the different neighbouring regional powers. Particularly the Marathas and the Southern states (Hyderabad and Mysore) were constantly in the race for expanding their territorial boundaries. This generated tension among the regional powers and none could ultimately dominate over the other. Disunity among the regional powers paved the way for the external forces to establish their dominance over India.

Socio-economic and cultural conditions in 18th century

Economy

India of the 18th century was a land of contrasts. Extreme poverty existed side by side with extreme riches and luxury. On the one hand, there were the rich and powerful nobles steeped in luxury and, comfort, on the other, backward, oppressed and impoverished peasants living at the bare subsistence level and having to, bear all sorts of injustices and inequities.

Even so, the life of the Indian masses was, by and large, better at this time than it was after over 100 years of British rule at the end of the 19th century.

Agriculture

Indian agriculture during the 18th century was technically backward and stagnant. But he rarely reaped the benefits of his labour. His rewards for his own labour were severely inadequate.The state, the zamindars, the

jagirdars, and the revenue-farmers tried to extract the maximum amount from the peasant community. This was as true of the Mughal state as of the Maratha or Sikh chiefs or other successors of the Mughal state.

Indian villages were largely self-sufficient and imported little from outside and the means of communication were backward.

Trade

In the 18th century, India imported the following items:

- Pearls, raw silk, wool, dates, dried fruits, and rose water from the Persian Gulf region
- Coffee, gold, drugs, and honey from Arabia; tea, sugar, porcelain, and silk from China;
- Gold, musk and woollen cloth from Tibet;
- Tin from Singapore;
- Spices, perfumes, arrack, and sugar from the Indonesian islands:
- Ivory and drugs from Africa; and
- Woollen cloth, metals such as copper, iron, and lead, and paper from Europe.

  India's most important article of export was cotton textiles which were famous all over the world for their excellence and were in demand everywhere. India also exported raw silk and silk fabrics, hardware, indigo, saltpetre, opium, rice, wheat, sugar, pepper and other spices, precious stones, and drugs.

  India did not import foreign goods on a large scale; it had self-sufficiency in handicrafts and agricultural products. On the other hand, Indian industrial and agricultural products had a steady market abroad. Consequently, it exported more than it imported and its trade was balanced by Import of silver and gold.

Urbanization

The level of urbanization was clearly higher in 1800 than a century before. What had changed in the urban centres was the relative balance of power between rulers and merchants. In some instances, commercial and financial magnets were arrogating to themselves the powers of the state. The large scale domestic and foreign trade brought into existence the merchant –capitalist and the development of the banking system. The emergence of the Jagat

Seth (Bengal) and chettias (Madras) with their elaborate banking system gave a fillip to trade and commerce

The 18th century was a period of considerable political turmoil in India, one in which states were formed and dissolved in quick succession. There was a great deal of fluidity in the system. Those raids by military forces would have caused the dislocation of the economic forces. The destruction of irrigation tanks, the forcible expropriation of cattle wealth, and even the forced march of masses of people must have had a harmful effect on economic stability and curtailed the impulse toward growth.

The decline of the Mughal capitals of Delhi and Agra was offset by the rise of regional capitals, including Lucknow, Hyderabad, the various Maratha cities, and Seringapatam. These regions with considerable amounts of resources actually attracted the English and other European traders and triggered off a competition among them for mastery over the subcontinent.

The Social Context

Indian society in the 18th century was divided into multi-layered identities on the basis of religion, region, tribe, language, class, and caste. Hindus were divided on the basis of hundreds of castes. The caste was decided by birth, fixing the permanent place of the people in the social hierarchy. Inter-caste marriages and inter-caste dining were forbidden. Traditionally, caste was the basis of the profession but by the eighteenth century to some extent social and professional mobility was being followed. For example, Brahmans started adopting various progenies and pursuing trading activities. The caste continued to be a major divisive force.

Muslims were also influenced by the considerations of race, caste, tribe, and status. The Shias and Sunnis had major religious differences while the Irani, Afghani, Turani and Hindustani Muslims had a lot of differences to stand apart from each other. People converted to Islam carried their caste into the religion. The basic social unit was the family based on patriarchal. Women were expected to live as role models of ideal daughters, wives, and mothers. Women of the upper classes, in north India, had to follow Purdah. Child marriages were prevalent and marriage was a social obligation between the two families. Among the upper classes, polygamy and dowry were

prevalent but the greatest evil of eighteenth-century India was the custom of Sati and the condition of widows among the Hindus.

Education

The education system could not change according to the requirements of the time. The curriculum was confined to literature, languages, law, religion, philosophy and logic and excluded the study of physical and natural sciences, technology and geography.

There was lack of progressive ideas as theoretical framework dominated at that time. Elementary education was widespread. Mediums of higher education were Sanskrit and Persian only. Moreover, this education excluded females and low caste people.

Cultural Milieu

It is generally maintained that the eighteenth century witnessed a general decline in material life, the cultural life of the period also has often been denigrated. Even Delhi, whose economic condition unequivocally declined, had a number of major poets, philosophers, and thinkers in this epoch, from Shah Waliullah to Mir Taqi Mir. Further, as regional courts grew in importance, they tended to take on the function of the principal patrons of high culture, whether in music, the visual arts, or literature. It is thus also in relatively dispersed centres, ranging from Awadh to Bikaner and Lahore to Thanjavur, that one finds the courtly traditions of culture persisting. Thanjavur under the Marathas is a particularly fine example of cultural efflorescence, in which literary production of a high quality in Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, and Marathi continued, with some of the Maratha rulers themselves playing a significant direct role.

Similarly, it is in the eighteenth century Thanjavur that the main compositions of what is today known as the Carnatic tradition of Indian classical music came to be written, by such men as Tyagaraja, Muttuswami Diksitar, and Syama Sastri. Many of the theatre and musical traditions, as well as formal literary genres of the period, picked up and 'reincorporated folk influences. At the same time, the interaction of popular Hinduism and Islam gave a particular flavour to cultural activities associated with pilgrimages and festivals. When a major new political centre emerged, it rapidly attracted talent, as evidenced in Ranjit Singh's Lahore. Here, Persian literature of high quality was produced, but not at the cost of literary output in Punjabi.

At the same time, new developments were visible in the fields of architecture and painting. Farther to the north, the principality of Kangra fostered an important new school of painting, devoted largely to Vaishnava themes. The cultural assimilation was outcome of mutual influence and respect. Among the major religions the Marathas supported the shrine of Shaikh Muinuddin Chisti in Ajmer and the Raja of Tanjore financed the shrine of Shaikh Shahul Hamid of Nagaur.

Tipu Sultan of Mysore supported Shringeri temple and Muslims joyfully participated in the Hindu festivals just as the Hindus were part of Muharram processions. Indeed, a surprisingly large proportion of what is understood today to be part of India's "traditional" culture is attributable to this period and also to the preceding century.

The Beginning of European Settlements

Before the beginning of the formal rule of the British in India, there was a background of the Indo-European economic relationship. The commercial contacts between India and Europe were very old via the land route either through the Oxus valley or Syria or Egypt. But, the new sea route via the Cape of Good Hope was discovered by Vasco da Gama in 1498. Thereafter, many trading companies came to India and established their trading centers. The coming of the Europeans to India was an event of very great importance in the history of our country as it ultimately led to revolutionary changes in her destiny in the future and the Portuguese were the first in this field.

The Portuguese

Vasco da Gama

In 1498, Vasco da Gama of Portugal discovered a new and all-sea route from Europe to India. He sailed around Africa via the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) and reached Calicut.The Portuguese came to India to trade and they wanted to take away the spice trade from the Arab traders. They even resorted to piracy in order to capture the spice trade.

The appearance of the Portuguese in India led to a conflict of interests between importers and exporters. The Indian importers, many of whom were Muslims, welcomed the Portuguese as new customers. The Arab and Egyptian customers objected to them as new competitors who might break their existing monopoly.

In 1501, Vasco da Gama came to India for the second time and founded a factory at Cannanore and returned to Portugal in 1503. In spite of the opposition from the Arabs, the Portuguese were able to establish their trading centers at Calicut., Cochin, and Cannanore and they treated the Arabs with cruelty and oppression.

Portuguese State of India or simply Portuguese India (India Portuguesa) was founded to serve as the governing body of fortresses and colonies that were established overseas by the Portuguese.

Francisco de Almeida

In 1505, Francisco de Almeida was appointed as the first Viceroy, with his headquarters in Cochin. He was set out from Lisbon with instructions to develop Portuguese commerce by building fortifications on the east coast of Africa, concluding alliances with the Indian rulers, and taking control of the spice trade from the Arabs. In Africa he built forts at Kilwa and Sofala and burned Mombasa. After his arrival in India he built further forts but relied mainly on his fleets to secure control of all sea trade. The Egyptians, seeing their commerce threatened, built a fleet (with the help of Venice) and defeated and killed (1508) Almeida's son at Chaul. However, in 1509, Almeida won a great naval battle against them and their Indian allies off Diu. Almeida at first refused to yield his power to Afonso de Albuquerque and had Albuquerque imprisoned (1509), but he later gave him command. On his way home to Portugal, Almeida was killed by Khoikhoi near the Cape of Good Hope.

His policy being centric to controlling the Indian Ocean was known as the 'Blue Water Policy ' (Cartaze System). As per this policy, the Portuguese should be the sole trade power in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. It called for the Portuguese to be powerful at the sea instead of building fortresses on Indian mainland.

Afonso de Albuquerque

In 1509, Albuquerque was made the governor of the Portuguese territories in India. In 1510, he captured Goa from the ruler of Bijapur. Thereafter, Goa became the capital of the Portuguese settlements in India. Albuquerque captured Malacca and Ceylon. He also built a fort at Calicut. He encouraged his countrymen to marry Indian women. Albuquerque died in 1515 leaving the Portuguese as the strongest naval power in India. Albuquerque established relations with the rulers of South-East Asia. He introduced the 'Policy of Imperialism'. The main goals of his policy—control over the spice sources and of the trade routes—were nearly attained during his brief tenure of power.

The successors of Albuquerque established Portuguese settlements at Daman, Salsette and Bombay on the west coast and at Santhome near Madras and Hugli in Bengal on the east coast. However, the Portuguese power declined in India by the end of the sixteenth century. They lost all their possessions in India except Goa, Daman, and Diu in the next century.

Decline of the Portuguese

Portuguese rise in Indian had a short life as the new rival trading communities from Europe posed a big challenge to them. Struggle among various rival trading blocs ensued in which Portuguese had to give way to the more powerful and enterprising competitors gradually rendering them an atrophied entity. Ironically, the Portuguese, who were the first arrived India, were the last to withdraw from here in 1961 when the Government of India recaptured Goa, Daman and Diu from them.

Causes of failure

- After the death of Albuquerque, no strong person was sent by the Portuguese Government to India. The result was that the Portuguese empire began to disintegrate.

- The Portuguese administration in India was corrupt. The salaries of the officials were low and consequently, they felt no hesitation in accepting bribes from any quarter. The bulk of the Portuguese officials were selfish. Unmindful of the sufferings of the people, they were bent upon making fortunes for themselves.
- The religious policy of the Portuguese was also responsible for their ruin. They used all kinds of methods for the conversion of the people of India to Christianity. Their coercive methods created bitterness in the minds of the people, in 1540, all the Hindu temples in the Island of Goa were destroyed under the orders of their king.
- The establishment of the Mughal Empire was also partly responsible for Portuguese failure. At the beginning of the 16th century, the Portuguese did not meet any great opposition. However, after the accession of Akbar in 1556, the Mughal power began to grow. The Mughals were able to bring practically the whole of India under their control. Under these circumstances, there was no scope for the growth of the Portuguese power on the mainland of India.
- The rise of Dutch and the English power in India created strong rivals in the country. They were more than a match for the Portuguese. The result was that by slow degrees the Portuguese empire in India failed.

Contribution of the Portuguese to India

- The Portuguese greatly enriched the Indian vocabulary and medical science. The first treatise on the medical plants of India was written by a Portuguese scholar Garcia da Orta in 1563.
- They brought tobacco cultivation in India.
- They established first printing press in India at Goa in AD 1556.
- The Portuguese influence is also visible on the ecclesiastical architecture of India, especially in Deccan. The credit for popularising the ornate Manuelesque architecture in the western coast also goes to the Portuguese.

The Dutch

In March 1602, by a charter of the Dutch parliament, the Dutch East India Company was formed with powers to make wars, concluded treaties, acquire territories and build fortresses.

The Dutch set up factories at Masulipatam (1605), Pulicat (1609), Surat (1616), Karikal (1645), Chinsura (1653), Kasimbazar, Baranagore, Patna, Balasore, Negapatam (all in 1658) and Cochin (1663). In the 17th century, they supplanted the Portuguese as the most dominant power in European trade with the East, including India. Pulicat was their center in India till 1690, after which Nagapatam replaced it.

Anglo-Dutch Rivalry

The Dutch rivalry with the English, during the seventeenth century, was bitterer than that of the Portuguese. The policy of the Dutch in the East was influenced by two motives: one was to take revenge on Catholic Spain, the foe of their independence, and her ally Portugal, and the other was to colonise and establish settlements in the East Indies with a view to monopolising commerce in that region. They gained their first object by the gradual decline of Portuguese influence. The realisation of their second object brought them into bitter competition with the English.

In the middle of the 17th century (1654) the English began to emerge as a formidable colonial power. After 60-70 years of rivalry with the English, the Dutch power in India began to decline by the beginning of the 18thcentury. Their final collapse came with their defeat by the English in the Battle of Biderra in 1759. One by one the Dutch lost their settlement to the English. Their expulsion from their possessions in India by the British came in 1795.

The British

The British East India Company was a Joint- Stock Company established in 1600, as The Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies. During this time, other trading companies, established by the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and Danish were similarly expanding in the region. The British Company gained a footing in India in 1612 after Mughal emperor Jahangir granted the rights to establish a factory (a trading post) in Surat to Sir Thomas Roe, a representative diplomat of Queen Elizabeth I of England. They entered India as traders at the outset but by the passage of time indulged in the politics of India and finally established their colonies.

The commercial rivalry among the European powers led to political rivalry. Ultimately, the British succeeded in establishing their rule in India.

The English established their factories at Agra, Ahmadabad, Baroda, and Broach by 1619. The English East India Company acquired Bombay from Charles II, the then king of England. In 1639, Francis Day founded the city of Madras where Fort St. George was built. In 1690, an English factory was established at a place called Sutanuti by Job Charnock. Later it developed into the city of Calcutta where Fort William was built. Later, Calcutta became the capital of British India. Thus Bombay, Madras, Calcutta became three presidency towns of the English settlements in India.

The Danes

Denmark also established trade settlements in India. Their settlement at Tranquebar was founded in 1620. Another important Danish settlement in India was Serampore in Bengal. Serampore was their headquarters in India. They failed to strengthen themselves in India and they sold all their settlement in India to the British in 1845.

The French

The French East India Company (Compagnie des Indes Orientales) was formed by Colbert (finance minister to King LouisXIV.) under state patronage in 1664. The first French factory was established at Surat by Francois Caron in 1668. A small village was acquired from the Muslim governor of Valikondapuram by Francois Martin and Bellanger de Lespinay in 1673. The village developed into Pondicherry and its first governor was Francois Martin. Also, Chandernagore in Bengal was acquired from the Mughal governor in 1690. The French power in India declined between 1706 and 1720 which led to the reconstitution of the Company in 1720. The French power in India was revived under Lenoir and Dumas (governors) between 1720 and 1742. They occupied Mahe in the Malabar, Yanam in Coromandal (both in 1725) and Karaikal in Tamil Nadu (1739). The arrival of Dupleix as a French governor in India in 1742 saw the beginning of the Anglo-French conflict (Carnatic wars) resulting in their final defeat in India.

Anglo-French Struggle in South India

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, only two European trading companies of the British and the French were left in India competing for the Indian resources. The Anglo-French rivalry, taking the form of three Carnatic Wars constituted landmarks in the history of the British conquest of South India in the eighteenth century. In order to establish their supremacy, it was necessary for the English East India Company to eliminate the French from this region.

First Carnatic War (1740-48)

The First Carnatic War was provoked through the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in 1742 flanked by the two countries. Through 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 as Madras was occupied by them. At this juncture, the Nawab of Carnatic responded to an English appeal to protect Madras and his armies were defeated through the small French army at St. Thomas close to Madras. With the end of the war in Europe, the hostilities in India ceased, but only temporarily. The issue of supremacy had not been decisively settled and from 1748 onwards a situation of disagreement once again appeared. The First Carnatic War came to an end when the treaty of Aix-la-Chappelle was concluded in 1748 to end the Austrian Succession War as a part of the peace settlement; Madras was restored to the English.

Despite their naval weakness, it was obvious that the French had performed better in the first Carnatic War. French military superiority was obvious not only to the English but also to the Indian powers. Since the latter did not possess navies, they could not have a. say at all in European conflicts in India. Even their land armies, though impressive in numbers, were no match for European armies.The large but ill-disciplined and unwieldy Indian armies could not stand up against the smaller but better disciplined Western armies. The war had revealed to the full the weakness o the armies of independent Nawabs and thereby fully aroused the cupidity of both the Companies for territorial expansion in India.

The Second Carnatic War (1749-54)

Unlike the first Carnatic war, there was no European war to provide a pretext for the outbreak of hostilities between the English and the French in the second instance. Rivalry in India provided the context, but it became a life and death struggle for the survival of the English and French EIC in India.

The second war was the outcome of the diplomatic efforts of Dupleix, the French Governor-Common in India. He evolved the strategy of using the well-disciplined, modern French army to intervene in the mutual quarrels of the Indian princes and, by supporting one against the other, securing monetary, commercial, or territorial favours from the victor. Thus, he planned to use the resources and armies of the local rajas, nawabs, and chiefs to serve the interests of the French Company and to expel the English from India.

Carnatic was a province under the subedar of Deccan, i.e. the Nizam of Hyderabad and was ruled by a governor the Nawab with his headquarters at Arcot. Since the Nizam was usually busy with his own affairs- tackling the Marathas and other forces in Northern India, the Nawab practically enjoyed independent power.

In 1740, i.e. before the first Carnatic War, the Marathas had invaded the Carnatic and killed the Nawab-Dost Ali. They also took his son-in-law Chanda Sahib as a prisoner to Satara. The prevailing conditions of stability prompted the Nizam to come to the Carnatic in 1743 and to appoint Anwar-ud-din Khan as tile Nawab of Carnatic. But this appointment only worsened the situation especially after 1748 when Chanda Sahib was set free by the Marathas after seven years of captivity. In the same year (1748) Asaf-Jah-Nizam ul Mulk, the Hyderabad Nawab, passed away. He was succeeded by his son, Nasir Jang. But his grandson, Muzaffar Jang laid claim to the throne on the ground that the Mughal Emperor had appointed him as the governor of the Carnatic. Muzaffar Jang found an ally in Chanda Sahib to "fight" together to gain their respective seats in Hyderabad and the Carnatic. The situation gave full scope to Dupleix's talents for intrigue.

Dupleix extended support to Chandra 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 (Anwaruddin andNasir Jang) in 1749. The French gained territorially and monetarily. Important gains were the Northern Sarkars, Masulipatnam and some villages approximately Pondicherry. Political powers were secured at the Nizam's court through the appointment of an agent at the court. The French power in South India was now at its height. Dupleix's plans had succeeded beyond his dreams.

But the English had not been silent spectators of their rival's successes. In 1750, they decided to throw their entire strength behind Muhammad Ali (Son of Anwaruddin). Robert Cliveproposed that French pressure on Muhammad Ali, besieged at Trichinopoly, could be released by attacking Arcot, the capital of Carnatic. As expected, Chanda Sahib and the French were compelled to raise the siege of Trichinopoly. The French forces were repeatedlydefeated. Chanda Sahib was soon captured and killed.

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, proved disastrous for it. The French state was not only corrupt and decadent. Dupleix was recalled after negotiations with the English Company in 1754.

Charles Godeheu succeeded Dupleix as Governor-General in India. In. a complete reversal of Dupleix's policy, he reopened negotiations with the British and concluded the treaty of Pondicherry (1754). The English and the French both agreed not to interfere in the quarrels of native princes and each party was left in possession of the territory that it actually occupied at the time of the treaty.

Third Carnatic War

A third war broke out in 1756 with the commencement of the war in Europe. The French army under Count de Lally succeeded in capturing the English forts of St. David and Vizianagaram in 1758. These reverses alarmed the British and they inflicted heavy losses on the French fleet. The decisive battle of the third Carnatic War was fought at Wandiwash on 22 January 1760. British General Eyre Coote's army totally routed the French army under Lally. In the next three months, all the minor French possessions in the Carnatic had been effectively reduced by Coote's efforts. The French were left with no possessions in the Carnatic except Jinje and Pondicherry. Finally, in May 1760, the English laid siege to Pondicherry

The third Carnatic war proved to be a decisive battle for the survival between English and the French in India. Although, Peace of Paris (1763) restored to French their factories in India, the French political capital completely vanished after the war. The treaty allowed the French Crown to rnaintain the French factories in India for the

benefit of private traders. It was a feeble effort and the French, like their Portuguese and Dutch counterparts in India, confined themselves to "country trade".

Causes of the failure

The causes of the French failure in the Carnatic wars can be traced to several factors.

- The French had no permanent naval presence in India was a disabling factor vis-a-vis the British, who had a formidable naval presence in India.
- Unlike the English East India Company, the French East India Company was a State concern, depending on anything and everything on the home government its freedom of action was very much limited by the charter and the whims and fancies of the rulers.
- French East India Company lost the energy and vigour of a private enterprise. Its limited resources were inadequate and the viceroys and their subordinates very often indulged in private trade smuggling, slave trade, etc. which directly or indirectly contributed much to the deviation from the main purpose and the consequent collapse of the French power.
- British East India Company had access to the rich resources of Bengal. From this secure base, they could send a constant supply of men and money to Madras and distracted the French by launching diversionary attacks against the French as they did in the Carnatic regions.
- Dupleix involvement in internal political matters of Indian rulers affected French Company's commercial activities. Dupleix thought that the Indian trade was a failure and that military conquest opened up a more attractive prospect. The English, however, never forgot that they were primarily a trading body.

The Rise of British Power

During the heyday of Mughal rule, the number of Europeans came to India for trading. These Europeans were well organized as joint-stock companies and set up their trading centres called factories in different regions of India. Initially, they competed among themselves for having a monopoly over European trade with India. In this European rivalry, the English scored easy victories over the Portuguese and Dutch but met stiff resistance from the French. The Anglo-French trade rivalry and their subsequent attempt to interface in the political affairs of India culminated in the Carnatic Wars. By the end of the Third Carnatic War, the French were no longer a threat to the British who now became strong contenders in South Indian politics.

In the meanwhile, the political situation undergoing drastic changes in another important region of India, viz., Bengal, which was one of the most fertile and prosperous parts of India. Bengal, which was originally a Mughal province, had emerged as an autonomous state in the 18th century. Siraj-ud-Daula, the then Bengal Nawab, seeing the hostile activities of the British, was apprehensive of the fate of Bengal and decided to take action against them. This resulted in a series of events culminating in the so-called 'Battle of Plassey', which made the British the 'King-maker' in Bengal. The subsequent activities of the British there led to a final showdown in the form of the Battle of Buxar which proved to be a turning point making the British real masters of Bengal, though formal authority still remained with the Nawab. From their base here, the British began to compete first as equals and later superiors to the Indian powers.

With the victory of the British in the Carnatic Wars and more importantly in the Bengal battles began the process of their conquest of India. By 1765, the British had not only become the virtual rulers of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa but also begun to dictate terms to the Nawabs of both Carnatic and Awadh. The British, however, had to contend with the Marathas for another half a century and also had to overcome the resistance of Hyderabad and Mysore states. This was a gradual process by the end of which parts of India came under British control.

The most 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.

From Trading Company to Political Power

The mid-18th century saw the transformation of the English East India Company from trading enterprises to political power. From its establishment on 31 December 1600 to 1744, the English East India Company slowly

expanded its trade and power in India. The Company did not have to fear competition from other English trading companies. Trading companies in those days made profit primarily by excluding competition so that they could buy cheap and sell dear. The Portuguese and Dutch were eased out through a strategy combining war and manoeuvres 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 the British military might and diplomatic strategy were successfully tested out in the disagreement with the French Company. This disagreement, 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 the 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 troops and so the acquisition of territory seemed the best method of meeting this requirement.
- For example, the company‘s interest in conquering Bengal was two-fold-protection of its trade and control in excess of Bengal‘s revenue.
- The intention was to remit the surplus revenue of Bengal as a tribute through the channel of investment in Bengal goods.

The British conquest of Bengal, 1757-65

The history of Bengal from 1757 to 1765 is the history of the gradual transfer of power from the Nawabs to the British. During this short period of eight years three Nawabs, Siraj-ud-daula, Mar Jafar, and Mir Kasim ruled over Bengal. But they failed to uphold the sovereignty of the Nawab and ultimately the rein of control passed into the hands of the British.

The Company had secured valuable privileges in 1717 ‘under a royal Farman by the Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar, which had granted the Company the freedom to export and import their goods in Bengal without paying taxes and the right to issue passes or dustaks for the movement of such goods. According to this Imperial Farman, the Company had to pay Rs. 3000 a year and in return could carry on trade duty- free in Bengal. The Company’s servants were also permitted to trade but were not covered by this farman, They were ‘required to pay the same taxes as Indian merchants. However, Company’s servants extended farman privilege to their own coastal trade, inter- Asian trade and finally the inland trade. This was an obvious usurpation

The farmanwas a perpetual source of conflict between the Company and the Nawabs of Bengal. For one, it meant the loss of revenue to the Bengal Government. ‘Secondly, the power to issue dustaks for the Company’s goods was misused by the Company’s servants to evade taxes on their private trade. By the time Siraj-ud- Daula succeeded Alivardi Khan as Nawab of Bengal in 1756 trade privileges and their misuse by the Company and its officers had already become an issue of conflict.

Certain other factors also further strained the relations between the two. They were:

- The fortification around Calcutta by the English Company without the permission of the Nawab. Siraj interpreted this action as an attack upon his sovereignty.
- The misuse of the Company’s trade privilege by its officials for their private trade.
- The English Company at Calcutta had given shelter to the offenders of the Nawab (Krishna Das, son of Raj Ballabh), who had fled with immense treasures.
- The Company officials also suspected that nawab was going to have an alliance with the French in Bengal. Siraj-ud-Daula’s attack on Calcutta precipitated an open conflict.

Battle of Plassey

The succession of Siraj was opposed by a dominant group in the Nawab's court comprising Jagat Seth, Ami chand, Raj Ballabh. The company had also decided to install a more pliable ruler in Siraj place who would allow them unlimited trade privileges. The British hatched a conspiracy against the nawab in alliance with his officers like Rai Durlabh, Ami Chand, Mir Jafar, and Jagat Seth.

The fateful battle of Plassey was a battle only in name as English victory in the battle was pre-decided. It was not the superiority of the military power but the conspiracy that helped the English in winning the battle. The Battle of Plassey became famous because it was the first major victory the company won in India. After the defeat at Plassey, Siraj-ud-Daulah was assassinated and Mir Jafar was awarded the Nawabship by Clive for his support to the English. The Company was granted undisputed right to free trade in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa It also received the zamindari of the 24 Pargana near Calcutta. Mir Jafar paid a sum of Rs. 17,700,000 as compensation for the attack on Calcutta to the Company.

However, Mir Jafar could not support the ever-increasing demands of the English who were also suspicious about his collaboration with the Dutch Trading Company. Mir Jafar, who was made nawab after the battle of Plassey, was deposed in 1760. Mir Qasim (son-in-law of Mir Jafar) was placed on the throne by the British in the hope that he would be able to meet their financial demands.

The new Nawab was an able, efficient, and strong ruler, determined to free himself from foreign control. He succeeded in establishing a better system of administration. But he came into conflict with the British in Bengal on the question of a privilege i.e. duty free private trade of the Company. He took the drastic 'step of abolishing all duties on internal trade, thus providing his own subjects a concession that the English had seized by force. But the alien merchants were no longer willing to tolerate equalitybetween them and Indian traders as it deprived the British private traders of the privileged position they had created for themselves, and they could not compete with Indian traders on equal terms. The Nawab's attempts to reorganize the army and shifting of capital from Murshidabad to Monghyr were also taken as unforgivable offenses by the Company.

Black Hole of Calcutta

- The Black Hole of Calcutta was a dungeon in Fort William, Calcutta measuring 4.30 × 5.50 □ metres (14 × 18 □□ feet), in which troops of Siraj ud-Daulah, the Nawab of Bengal, held British prisoners of war on the night of 20 June 1756.
- John Zephaniah Holwell, one of the British prisoners and an employee of the East India Company, said that, after the fall of Fort William, the surviving British soldiers, Indian sepoys, and Indian civilians were imprisoned overnight in conditions so cramped that many people died from suffocation and heat exhaustion, and that 123 of 146 prisoners of war imprisoned there died.
- Modern historians believe that 64 prisoners were sent into the Hole, and that 43 died there
- Siraj-ud-daula did not order the prisoners to be shut in the black hole and knew nothing about it until afterwards.

Significance of the Battle of Plassey

The battle of Plassey was of immense historical importance. It paved the way for the British mastery of Bengal and eventually of the whole of India. It boosted

British prestige and at a single stroke raised them to the status of a major contender for the Indian Empire. The rich revenues of Bengal enabled them to organize a strong army. Control over Bengal played a decisive role in the Anglo-French struggle. Lastly, the victory at Plassey enabled the Company and its servants to amass untold wealth at the cost of the helpless people of Bengal.

Battle of Buxar

In 1763 when the war between Mir Qasim and the company broke out, the Nawab couldn't stand before the mighty British forces and escaped to Awadh. Mir Qasim tried to organize a confederacy together with Emperor Shah Alam II and Shuja-ud-Daula Nawab of Awadh in a final bid to send the British away from Bengal.The three allies clashed with the Company's army at Buxar on 22 October 1764 and were thoroughly defeated. This was one of the most decisive battles of Indian history. It demonstrated the superiority of English arms over the combined

army of two of the major Indian powers. Buxar confirmed the decisions of Plassey.

Robert Clive, who had returned to Bengal in 1765 as the Governor, decided to seize the chance of power of Bengal. He gradually transferred the authority of Government from the Nawab to the Company. In 1763, the British had restored Mir Jafar as Nawab and collected huge sums for the Company and its high officials. He and his successors had to pay Rs. 500,000, for a month to the company; they had also to submit to company intervention in matters of appointments and dismissal of officers, of reduction in military establishments. For all practical purposes, power was transferred to the British.

Lord Clive, then British Governor in Calcutta, concluded treaty of Allahabad in 1765 with the Shuja-ud-Daula, Nawab Wazir of Awadh.

- As per the treaty, Shuja-ud-Daula was to pay fifty lakhs of rupees for the expenses of the war and was given back his dominions. He also entered into a defensive alliance with the Company. Awadh became for the British a buffer state. The Nawab welcomed the alliance in the false belief that the Company, being primarily a trading body, was a transitory power while the Marathas and the Afghans were his real enemies. This was to prove a costly mistake for both Avadh and the rest of the country
- From Shah Alam II, Company acquired the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa in return for a regular annual payment of twenty- six lakhs of rupees. The British also gave Emperor Shah Alam II possession of Kara and Allahabad.

The British had very shrewdly consolidated their acquisition of Bengal and, in the meanwhile, used Avadh as a buffer state between their possessions and the Marathas.The Diwani rights allowed the Company to use the vast revenue resources of Bengal. This solved a major problem that the Company had earlier faced. From the early eighteenth century, its trade with India had expanded. But it had to buy most of the goods in India with gold and silver imported from Britain.

This was because at this time Britain had no goods to sell in India. The outflow of gold from Britain slowed after the Battle of Plassey and entirely stopped after the assumption of Diwani. Now revenues from India could finance Company expenses. These revenues could be used to purchase cotton and silk textiles in India, maintain Company troops, and meet the cost of building the Company fort and offices at Calcutta.

Dual System of Administration of Bengal

The treaty of Allahabad in 1765 inaugurated the Dual Government of Bengal. Robert 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 Nawab depended for his internal and external security on the British. As the Diwan, the Company directly collected its revenues, while through the right to nominate' the Deputy Subahdar, it controlled the Nizamat of the police and judicial powers. The virtual unity of the two branches of Government under British control was signified 'by the fact that the same person (Muhammad Raza Khan.) acted in Bengal as the Deputy Diwan on behalf of the Company and as Deputy Subedar on behalf of the Nawab. This arrangement is known in history as the Dual or Double Government. As naib Nazim, he was to represent the Nawab and as Naib diwan, he was to represent the Company. Thus the Nawab had to handle the entire responsibility for the civil and criminal justice administration. However, he had to function through Muhammad Raza Khan who was placed under the superintendence, direction, and control of the British Company.

Under the Dual system, the British had power and resources without responsibility while the Nawab had the responsibility of the administration without power to discharge it. Thus the Nawab had to take all responsibility for bad governance. The revenue remained the sole earning of the Company in lieu of a meagre annual payment to the Mughal Emperor.

Struggle for supremacy: Indian states and the British

In eighteenth-century India, we find the development of an intricate power struggle between various groups of powers that emerged after the decline of Mughal power and the gradual penetration of the European colonial powers into the Indian sub-continent. It was not only a struggle between the colonial power and the Indian states but also there was a struggle among the Indian powers themselves to establish political supremacy.

The most common cause for conflict among the Indian powers was the urge for territorial expansion.Territorial acquisitions were mainly a response to the need for further resources. When internally a limit had already been reached to extract fresh revenue, the main way of tapping new resources was the acquisition of fresh territories. A

prominent example: the Marath relied mostly on the Chaurh and the Sardeshmukhi, collected from their spheres of influence. This need for territorial expansion for the enlargement of their resources brought the different neighbouring states into conflict with each other.

The Indian states were constantly engaged in fighting with each other to pursue their aggressive expansionist policy. For example, the rise of Mysore was viewed with great alarm by the neighboring states of Marathas and Hyderabad. This mutual dissension and enmity among the 'country powers' ultimately helped the British to intervene effectively in their internal polity.

The reasons for British intervention in Mysore and the Maratha states were primarily commercial. Haidar and Tipu's control over the rich trade of the Malabar coast was seen as a threat to the British trade in pepper and cardamom. Mysore was also a threat to British control over Madras. Particularly the French alliance with the Mysore rulers was seen as a threat to the British domination in this region.

In the case of western India, the British authorities wanted to remove the intervention of the Marathas from the way of their lucrative cotton trade.

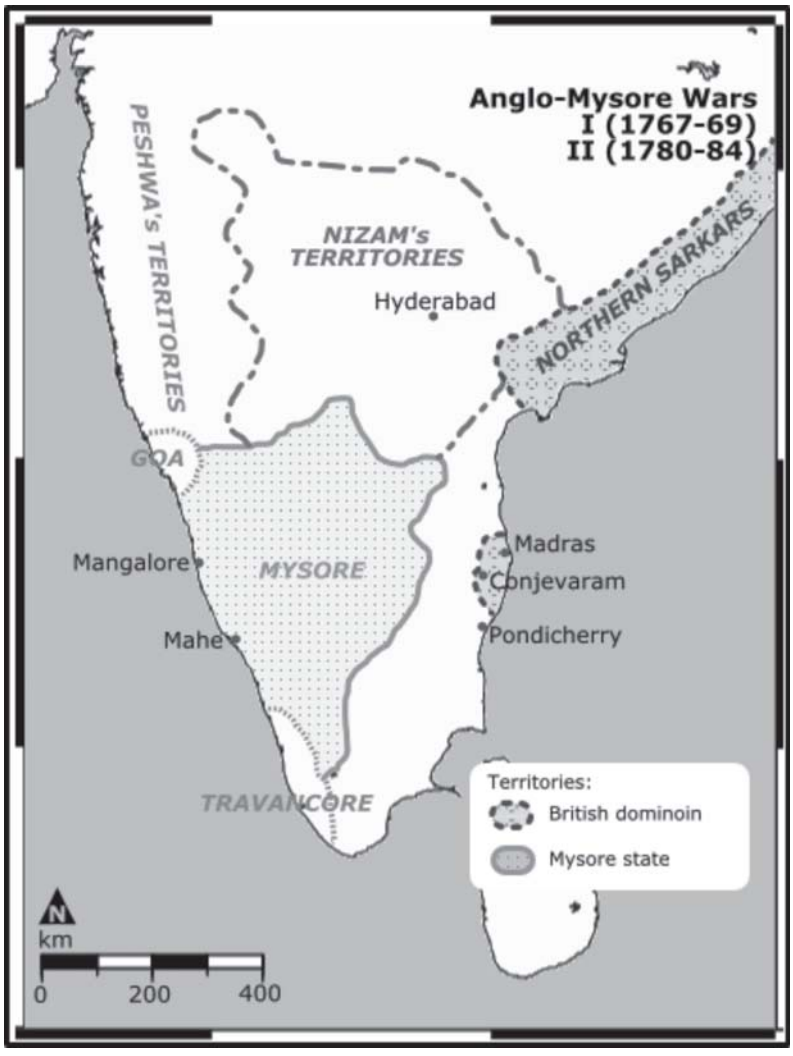
The British supported its military actions by arguing that most contemporary Indian rulers were tyrannical usurpers of previous dynasties, and could, therefore, be dispended with at-will so that people could be restored to a position where they fully enjoy their religious and civil rights.

Anglo-Mysore Wars

Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan fought far wars against the British before the final surrender of the Mysore to the British authority. The basic cause of these wars remained the same, i.e., the object of 'the' British to undermine the independent authority of the Mysore rulers.

First Anglo Mysore War (1767-69)

A tripartite alliance was formed against Haider Ali by the Britishers, the Nizam Ali of Hyderabad and the Marathas. Haider Ali bought Marathas and succeeded in breaking the alliance and alluring the Nizam with territorial gains. Together with the Nizam, he launched an attack on Arcot and later on the English by appearing at the gates of Madras. The panic-stricken Madras government signed the Treaty of Madras on 4th April 1769, under which basis was mutual restitution of each other's territories and a defensive alliance, where the English committed to helping Haider in case he was attacked by another power. Under the defensive alliance d both the powers, agreed to help the other in case of an attack by a third party.



The Second Anglo Mysore War (1780-84):

Mutual distrust between the English and Haider Ali caused the Second Anglo Mysore War. Haider Ali accused the Company of not observing the terms of the defensive

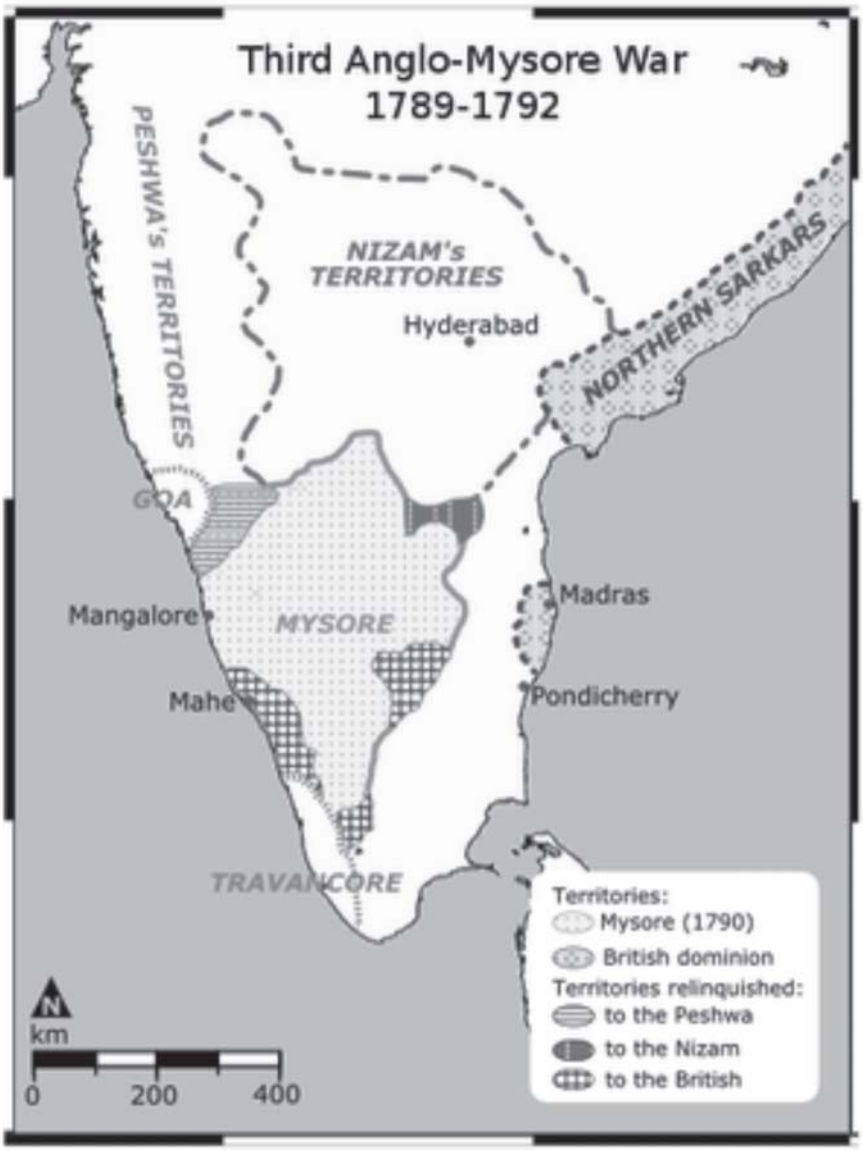
treaty when they refused to help him when the Marathas attacked Mysore in 1771. Furthermore, Haider Ali was helped by the French by meeting his military demands.

The British capture of Mahe, a French settlement within Haider's jurisdiction provided the immediate pretext for the second Anglo-Mysore war. An alliance was also formed by Haider Ali with the Hyderabad Nizam and the Marathas against the English Company in 1779. However, the British neutralized Haider by winning over the Marathas and Nizam and defeated Haider Ali at Port Novo. The Mysore troops continued occasional skirmishes but Haidar died of cancer in 1782 during the course of the second Anglo-Mysore war. Tipu, son and successor of Haidar, continued the war with English for another year. The war ended with the Treaty of Mangalore (March 1784) on the basis of mutual restitution of each other's territories was agreed.

The Third Anglo-Mysore War (1790-92):

The third Anglo Mysore War was caused by an attack on Travancore (a British ally) by Tipu because he had differences with the Raja of Travancore in 1790. The English declared war against Tipu supporting the ruler of Travancore. They were helped by the Maratha and Nizam's troops under the English army which was led by Cornwallis and marched towards Seringapatam (1792). The war started in 1790 and it continued for another two years.

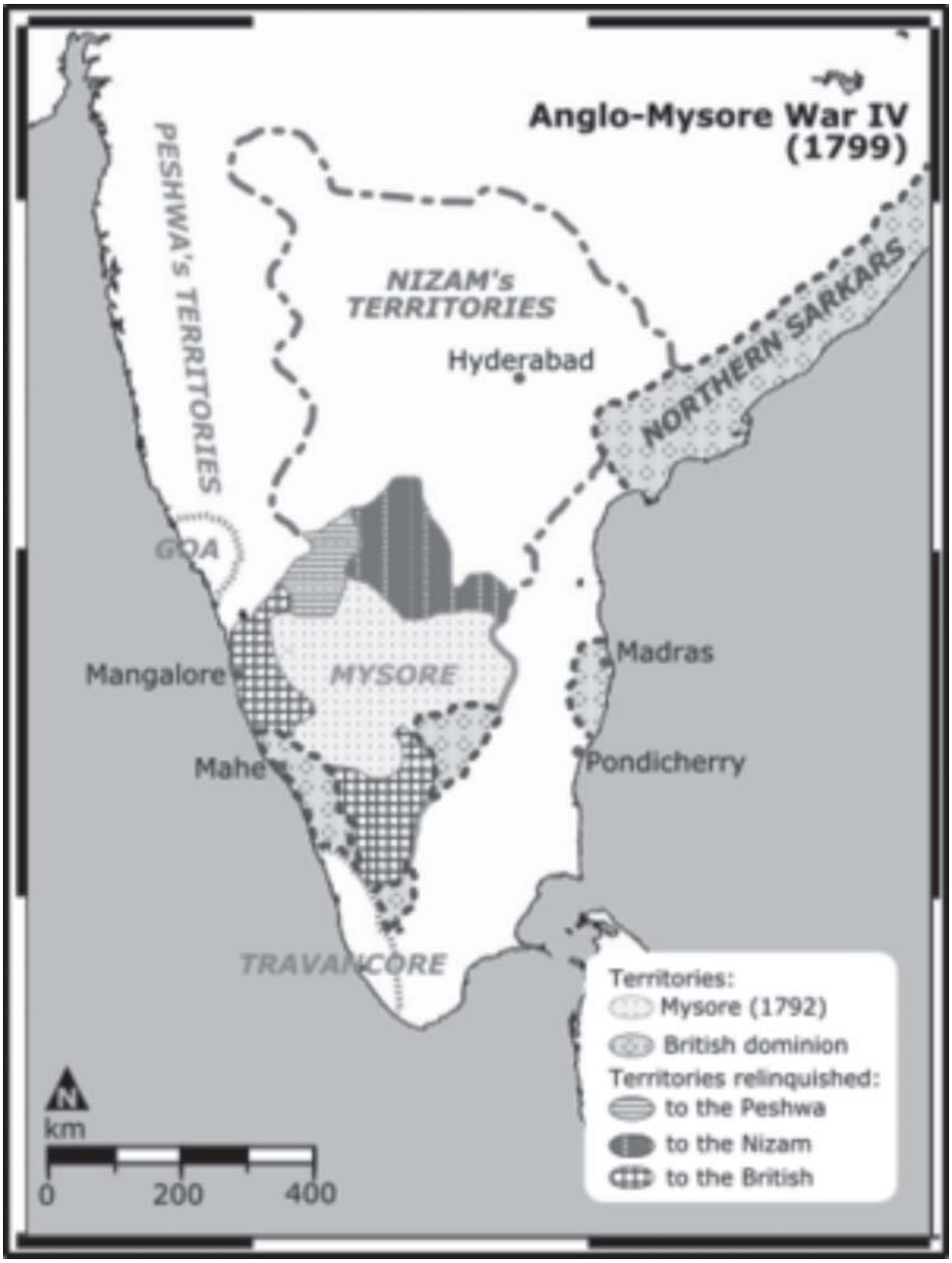
Tipu suffered a serious setback in the third Mysore war and showed initiative for peace. The **treaty of Serignapatam** was signed in 1792 and Tipu had to surrender half of his territory to British and its allies. The third Mysore war depleted Tipu's strength and undermined his authority in the Deccan.



Fourth Anglo-Mysore War

The arrival of Lord Wellesley as Governor-General of India in 1798 gave new vigour to the British expansionist policy. Wellesley desired to make Mysore an ally of his grand subsidiary alliance system. But Tipu had no intention of surrendering his independent authority to the British imperial system. The governor-general sent the British forces against the Mysore ruler who was defeated in a brief but fierce war in 1799. Tipu died in the course of the war in the same year.

Seringapatam was plundered and half of Tipu's dominions were divided between the British and their ally, the Nizam of Hyderabad. The rule of Tipu's dynasty came to an end and the Wodeyars from whom Haidar Ali had seized power were restored to the Mysore Kingdom. Mysore virtually became a dependency of the English.



Subsidiary Alliance

Lord Wellesley (1789- 1805) introduced the system of subsidiary alliances to bring the princely states under the purview of the British hegemony. Under this system, the princely states recognized the suzerainty of the British colonial power and in return, the British promised the protection of the princely state against any foreign power.

Under the terms of this alliance, Indian rulers were not allowed to have their independent armed forces. They

were to be protected by the Company, but had to pay for the "subsidiary forces" that the Company was supposed to maintain for the purpose of this protection. If the Indian rulers failed to make the payment, then part of their territory was taken away as a penalty.

The Subsidiary Alliance also usually provided that the Indian ruler would agree to the posting at his court of a British Resident, that he would not employ any European in his service without the approval of the British, and that he would not negotiate with any other Indian ruler without consulting the Governor-GeneralThe Resident was a senior British official posted in the capital of these Princely States, technically a diplomat but also responsible for keeping the ruler to his alliance. His role included advising in governance, intervening in succession disputes, and ensuring that the States did not maintain military forces other than for internal policing or else form diplomatic alliances with other States.

The cost of the subsidiary force provided by the British was very high and in fact, much beyond the paying capacity of the state. The payment of the arbitrarily fixed and artificially bloated subsidy invariably disrupted the economy of the state and impoverished its people.

The Subsidiary Alliance system was, on the other hand, extremely advantageous to the British. They could now maintain a large army at the cost of the Indian states. They were enabled to fight wars far away from their own territories.

They controlled thedefence and foreign relations of the protected ally, and had a powerful force stationed at, the very heart of his lands, and could, therefore, at a time of their choosing, overthrow him and annex his territories by declaring him to be 'inefficient'.

Lord Wellesley signed his first Subsidiary Treaty with the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1798. The Nawab of Avadh was forced to sign a Subsidiary Treaty In 1801. Also, the Nawab of Awadh was forced to give over half of his territory to the Company in 1801.

Anglo-Marathas Wars

The Marathas were the, only major Indian power left outside the sphere of British control. From the late eighteenth century, the Company sought to curb and eventually destroy Maratha power. With their defeat in the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761, the Maratha's dream of ruling from Delhi was shattered. They were divided into many states under different chiefs (sardars) belonging to dynasties such as Sindhia, Holkar, Gaikwad, and Bhonsle. These chiefs were held together in a confederacy under a Peshwa (Principal Minister) who became its effective military and administrative head based in Pune.

First Anglo-Maratha War (1775-82)

The immediate cause for the first Anglo Maratha War was English interference in the internal affairs of Marathas. The then Maratha Peshwa, Narayan Rao died without an heir. Raghunath Rao, who had his nephew Peshwa Narayan Rao killed in a conspiracy, wanted to get the Peshwaship which a strong party at Poona led by Nana Faadnvis opposed. Having failed in his bid to capture the power Raghunath Rao appealed to the British for help. He signed the Treaty of Surat in 1775 with the Bombay government with hopes to gain the throne with the help of English troops. This was the immediate background of the first Maratha war.

By the treaty of Surat, Raghunatha Rao had promised to cede Salsette and Bassein, and also refrain from forming an alliance with the Company enemies. In the First Anglo Maratha war that followed, none of the two parties were gaining ground and finally realized the futility of the struggle. The Treaty of Salbai in 1782 ended the first Anglo Maratha War.

By the **Treaty of Salbai,** there was peace between the Marathas and the British. In this treaty, the British began exerting pressure on Mysore with help from Marathas for recovering their territories from Haider Ali. Also,the English accepted Madhavrao II (son of Narayanrao) as the Peshwa. The peace established with the British continued for the coming 20 years. This gave the British needed time to concentrate; .on other fronts especially against Mysore.

The Second Anglo-Maratha War (1803-1806)

In Poona, with the death of two shrewd statesmen, Mahadji Sindhia and Nana Fadnavis there began a fierce rivalry for power between the Jaswant Rao Holkar on one side and Daulat Rao Sindhia and Peshwa Baji Rao II on the other were locked inmortal combat. Jaswant Rao Holkar, chief, defeated the combined armies of Sindhia and the Peshwa at Poona in 1800 and captured the city. The Peshwa approached Wellesley for help. This provided

Wellsley an ideal opportunity to intervene in the Maratha affairs. Thus the Second Maratha War started (1803-05). The Peshwa, Baji Rao II, accepted the subsidiary alliance and signed the Treaty of Bassein in 1802.

At this moment of their peril, Marathas failed miserably to unite against their common enemy. When Sindhia and Bhonsle fought the British, Holkar stood on the sidelinesand Gaekwad gave help to the British. When Holkar took up arms Bhonsle and Sindhia nursed their wounds. Moreover, the Maratha chiefs underestimated the enormously increased strength of the enemy and went into battle without adequate preparation.

The blatant expansionary policies of Wellesely had increased Company's debt from £ 17 million in 1797 to £ 31 million in 1806. In order to check further expansion and to put an end to ruinous expenditure, and to consolidate Britain's recent gains in India, Wellesley was therefore recalled from India.The recall of Lord Wellesley from India brought temporary peace in the region.

Third Anglo-Maratha war (1817-1818)

Marathas made a desperate last attempt to regain their independence and old prestige in 1817. The lead-in organizing a united front of the Maratha chiefs was taken by the Peshwa. However, once again the Marathas failed to evolve a concerted and well-thought-out plan of action. The Peshwa attacked the British Residency at Poona in November 1817.The Governor-General, Lord Hastings, struck back with characteristic vigor. He compelled Sindhia to accept British suzerainty and defeatedthe armies of the Peshwa, Bhonsle, and Holkar. The Maratha confederacy was dissolved and the Peshwaship was abolished. The British took complete control of the Peshwa Baji Rao's.dominions and he became a British retainer. Like other rulers of Indian states, the Maratha chiefs too existed from now on at the mercy of theBritish power.

The Rajputana states had been dominated for several decades by Sindhia and Holkar. After the downfall of the Marathas, they lacked the energy to reassert their independence and readily accepted British supremacy. The Company now had complete control over the territories south of the Vindhyas.

Policy of Paramountcy

It is clear from the above that from the early nineteenth century the Company pursued an aggressive policy of territorial expansion. Under Lord Hastings (Governor-general from 1813 to 1823) a new policy of "paramountcy" was initiated. Now the Company claimed that its authority and interests were paramount or supreme over those of other powers in India, hence its power was greater than that of Indian states. In order to protect its interests, it was justified in annexing or threatening to annex any Indian kingdom. This view continued to guide later British policies as well.

The Threat from Russia

The idea of 'Russian Peril' was propagated by Lord Palmerston, British Foreign Secretary, in the mid-nineteenth century and the term first time mentioned by William Bentinck, the Indian Governor-General was believed to reflect a real danger. Checked by the British in the Mediterranean Sea, the Russians rapidly advanced towards the north western frontier of Afghanistan. The British in India had not reached the natural frontier, as both Punjab and Sindh were independent states.

By 1818 the British had conquered almost the whole of India except Punjab and Sindh and their annexation too was only a question of time.

The Conquest of Sindh

The conquest of Sindh occurred as a result of the growing Anglo-Russian rivalry in Europe and Asia and the consequent British fears that Russia might attack India through Afghanistan or Persia. To counter Russia, the British Government decided to increase its influence in Afghanistan and Persia. It further felt that this policy could be successfully pursued only if Sindh was brought under British control. The commercial possibilities of the river Sindh were an additional attraction.

The roads and rivers of Sindh were opened to 'British trade by a treaty in 1832. The chiefs of Sindh, known as Amirs, were made to sign a Subsidiary Treaty in 1839. And finally, in spite of previous assurances that its territorial integrity would be respected, Sindh was annexed in 1843.

The Conquest of Punjab

Maharaja Ranjit Singh -considered as the greatest Indian ruler in his time- founded Sikh rule in Punjab. He occupied Lahore in 1799 to make Lahore his capital. The death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in June 1839 was followed by political instability and rapid changes of government in Punjab.

The First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-1846)

The British were closely watching the developments in Punjab and had their eyes on the fertile plains across the other side of Sutlej, they began engaging Sikh troops. With the appointment of Major Broadfoot as Company's Agent in 1843 at Ludhiana for Sikhs affairs then worsened Anglo-Sikh relations.

The British moves and preparations alarmed the Sikh troops which crossed the Sutlej in December 1845 and took an offensive position against the English troops.

After the British army victory in the ultimate battle of Sobraon, they occupied Lahore and dictated peace terms. The First Anglo-Sikh Battle ended with the Treaty of Lahore (1846).

The treaty limited the Sikh army to a specified number, Jullundur Doab was added to the British territoryand most importantly a British Resident (Sir Henry Lawrence) was appointed. The British imposed a heavy war indemnity amounting one and a half crores rupees on the Lahore durbar. Out of this, Half a crore was paid, and in lieu of the balance war indemnity, Lahore durbar offered to cede the territory of Kashmir.

The Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-1849):

The major causes for the Second Anglo Sikh War were:

- The Sikh Sardars were discontent with the British control over Punjab,
- The Sikh army wanted to avenge their humiliation in the first war.
- The revolt of Mul Raj, the governor of Multan provided the immediate occasion for the company's invasion of Punjab.

  The English, under Lord Gough decisively won the battles of the war. They very easily brought the whole of Punjab under their full control. In March 1849, Lord Dalhousie annexed Punjab under the Treaty of Lahore.

Doctrine of Lapse

Lord Dalhousie came to India as the Governor-General in 1848. He was from the beginning determined to extend direct British rule over a large area as possible.

Dalhousie had declared that "the extinction of all native states of India is just a question of time". The underlying motive of Dalhousie's policy was the expansion of British exports to India. Dalhousie, in common with other aggressive imperialists, believed that British exports to the native states of India were suffering because of the maladministration of these states by their Indian rulers.

The chief instrument through which Lord Dalhousie implemented his policy of annexation was the '**Doctrine of Lapse.'** Under the Doctrine of Lapse, when the ruler of a protected state died without a natural heir, his/her state was not to pass to an adopted heir as sanctioned by the age-old tradition of the country. Instead, it was to be annexed to the British dominions unless the adoption had been clearly approved earlier by the British authorities. Many states, including Satara in 1848 and Nagpur and Jhansi in 1854, were annexed by applying this doctrine. Dalhousie also refused to recognize the titles of many ex-rulers or to pay their pensions. Thus, the titles of the Nawabs of Carnatic and of Surat and the Raja of Tanjore were extinguished.

Annexation of Awadh

Lord Dalhousie was keen on annexing the kingdom of Avadh. But the task presented certain difficulties. For one, the Nawabs of Avadh had been British allies since the Battle of Buxar. Moreover, they had been most obedient to the British over the years. The Nawab of Avadh had many heirs and could not, therefore, be covered by the Doctrine of Lapse. Some other pretext had to be found for depriving him of his dominions.

The Nawabs of Avadh, like other princes of the day, were selfish rulers absorbed in self-indulgence who cared little for good administration for the welfare of the people. However, the responsibility for this state of affairs was in part that of the British who had at least since 1801 controlled and indirectly governed Avadh.Lord Dalhousie hit upon the idea of alleviating the plight of the people of Avadh. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was accused of having misgoverned his state and of refusing to introduce reforms. His state was therefore annexed in 1856.

Historical Forces and Factors which led to the British Conquest of India

There is a fundamental distinction between a historical force and a historical factor. Historical force is the unseen or the invisible element behind a certain happening. Historical factor on the other hand is a visible and apparent cause for a certain happening in history.

What were the forces of Modernism?

Modernism on the one hand and medievalism on the other were the historical forces which were responsible for the British conquest of India. Modernism, an outcome of the Renaissance spirit and the scientific view was the pervading force all over Western Europe from the 17th century onwards. Britain too was going through different phases of Modernism namely Mercantilism and later Imperialism (of Industrial capitalism). The concrete manifestations of the force of Modernism were the Agricultural, Scientific and Technological advancement, and Industrial Revolutions. Modernism, as was experienced by Britain from the 17th century onwards, was quite aggressive in nature and was responsible for the British conquest of colonies like India.

Medievalism, as a force, continued to pervade Asia, including India in the form of Feudalism even while the whole of Western Europe was experiencing the different phases of Modernism. The nature of Indian economy polity and society continued to be feudal as evident from the prevalence of Jagirdari system, absence of the modern sense of nationalism, lack of scientific temper, blind belief in superstitions, etc. Hence medievalism, with its crisis-ridden feudal system, could not meet the onslaught of a young and aggressive force, viz. Modernism.

Hence, the conquest of India by the British might not have been unavoidable, but the replacement of the exiting decadent system of Medievalism by a new representative system of Modernism was definitely unavoidable in India.

What were the Factors?

- The historical factors were the outcome of the historical forces of Modernism as well as Medievalism. With the onset of the Industrial Revolution in Britain for instance, there was a growing need for colonies which would supply raw materials for its industries as well as provide large markets for its finished or manufactured goods. India being predominantly a vast agrarian country seemed to be the right choice for a colony to meet both the above British needs. It produced raw-materials like cotton and indigo on large scale and it also provided a large market for British manufactured goods.
- Besides, in the wake of the decline of the Mughal Empire, India came to be politically fragmented into innumerable small kingdom and principalities. The one political power that could have brought about political unity at this stage, the Marathas, were beset with internal weaknesses and hence failed to deliver the goods at a crucial time. Utterly unmindful of the danger posed to them and to India by the European settlers, the Maratha chiefs wasted away their energies by continuously fighting fratricidal wars.
- There was total absence of the feeling of nationalism in its modern sense, among the Indians- both the rules and the ruled. Because of the above fact, the Indian rulers with the exception of a handful like Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan put their narrow and immediate interest above all, by inciting intervention by foreign power such as the French and the English on their behalf. And the Indian people too, lacking the feeling of modern nationalism enrolled themselves in large numbers in the British Indian armed forces and in their mercenary zeal became the main instrument of the British conquest of their own country.
- Moreover, the British were superior to the Indians in many aspects such as the organization of the armed forces methods and techniques of warfare, weapons of war etc. The British force, well trained and disciplined and paid in cash, were much better organized. The rout of the numerically superior Indian armies by the numerically much inferior British forces was due to the organizational superior of the British forces over their Indian counterparts.

- In methods and techniques of warfare too the English enjoyed an advantage over the Indians. For instance, the Indian rulers relied heavily on the cavalry while the British put great emphasis on their superior artillery which, in fact, tilted the scales and decided the issues in many a battle in their favour.
- Similarly the neglect of the navy by the Indian rulers and their failure to realize the importance of the British mastery over the seas proved disastrous to them as well as to India.
- Finally, the British being the beneficiaries of the Industrial and technological Revolutions possessed much superior weapons of war than the Indians.

Conclusion

If we analyse the process of annexation of Indian states by the East India Company from 1757 to 1857, certain key aspects emerge. The Company rarely launched a direct military attack on an unknown territory. Instead, it used a variety of political, economic and diplomatic methods to extend its influence before annexing an Indian kingdom. After the Battle of Buxar (1764), the Company appointed Residents in Indian states. They were political or commercial agents and their job was to serve and further the interests of the Company. Through the Residents, the Company officials began interfering in the internal affairs of Indian states. They tried to decide who was to be the successor to the throne, and who was to be appointed in administrative posts. Sometimes the Company forced the states into a "subsidiary alliance". The Company resorted to direct military confrontation when it saw a threat to its political or economic interests. This can be illustrated with the case of the southern Indian state of Mysore.

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