

Decline of the Mughal Empire

EXERCISES

A. Fill in the blanks:

1. During the first half of the **18th** century, the great Mughal Empire **decayed** and **disintegrated**.
2. The Mughal emperors who ruled India after the death of Aurangzeb are known as the **later** Mughals.
3. There were **four** groups of nobles in the Mughal court.
4. Nadir Shah looted and plundered **Delhi** He carried away immense treasures including the **priceless** Ko/tinoor and the **Peacock Throne**.
Ahmad Shah Abdali, the ruler of Afghanistan, repeatedly attacked the Mughal empire.
5. The last Mughal Emperor, **Bahadur Shah Zafar**, was defeated in the Revolt of 1857 and exiled to Rangoon by the British.

B. Match the following:

| A | B |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. Bahadur Shah | (a) mansabdari system |
| 2. Akbar | (b) financial crisis |
| 3. Shah Jahan | (c) Nadir Shah |
| 4. Kohinoor Diamond | (d) exiled to Rangoon by the British |
| 5. Bahadur Shah Zafar | (e) first of the Later Mughals |

Answer:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Bahadur Shah | (e) first of the Later Mughals |
| 2. Akbar | (a) mansabdari system |
| 3. Shah Jahan | (b) financial crisis |
| 4. Kohinoor Diamond | (c) Nadir Shah |
| 5. Bahadur Shah Zafar | (d) exiled to Rangoon by the British |

C. Choose the correct answer:

1. Aurangzeb/Akbar/Shah Jahan followed a policy of religious intolerance.

Ans. Aurangzeb followed a policy of religious intolerance.

2. The military campaign in the Deccan led by Shah Jahan/ Aurangzeb/Akbar ruined the Mughal Empire financially.

Ans. The military campaign in the Deccan led by Aurangzeb ruined the Mughal Empire financially.

3. The invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the ruler of Afghanistan/Persia/Iraq shattered the power and prestige of the Mughal Empire.

Ans. The invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the ruler of Afghanistan shattered the power and prestige of the Mughal Empire.

4. The Mughal Empire lasted for over 3/5/6

Ans. The Mughal Empire lasted for over 3 centuries.

5. The British ruled over India for a 100 years/nearly 200 years/ 300 years.

Ans. The British ruled over India for nearly 200 years.

D. State whether the following are true or false.

1. Bahadur Shah ascended the throne after the death of Aurangzeb.

True.

2. The Mughal court was united and stable.

False

Correct: The Mughal court was divided and unstable.

3. The Mughal officers were given jagirs as payments for their services.

True.

4. The Mughal rulers did not have a navy.

True.

5. The successors of Aurangzeb were very strong and efficient.

False.

Correct: The successors of Aurangzeb were very weak and unefficient.

E. Answer the following questions in one or two words/ sentences:

Question 1.

When did the transition from the Medieval to the Modern Period begin in India?

Answer:

The transition from the Medieval to the Modern Period began with the decline of the Mughal empire in the first half of the 18th century.

Question 2.

Name the first and the last emperors in the line of the Later Mughals.

Answer:

Bahadur Shah first in the line of emperors referred to as the Later Mughals. Bahadur Shah Zafar last emperor in the line of the Later Mughals.

Question 3.

Name any two rival groups of nobles in the Mughal court.

Answer:

1. The Iranis hailed from Persia,
2. Turanis hailed from Transoxiana.

Question 4.

Mention any two reasons for the failure of the mansabdari system.

Answer:

Mansabdars had to maintain a fixed number of troops. They were given jagirs as the payment for doing so. Later, an increase in the number of mansabs and a shortage of jagirs led to corruption and inefficiency in the system.

Question 5.

What was the economic impact of the Mughal wars of succession?

Answer:

After the death of a Mughal ruler, generally there were wars of succession among rival claimants to the throne. These wars proved very costly and destructive. They drained the resources of the empire and made it unstable and weak.

Question 6.

How did Aurangzeb's religious policy affect the relationship between the Mughals and

the Rajputs?

Answer:

Aurangzeb's policy of religious intolerance shook the foundations of the empire and resulted in the following:

1. The costly, long-drawn and ruinous Deccan campaign.
2. Numerous wars with the Sikhs, the Marathas, the Jats and the Rajputs.
3. Loss of support of the loyal Rajputs who had earlier contributed greatly to the stability of the Mughal Empire but now became its bitter foes.⁷

Question 7.

What led to the drain on the royal treasury during Shah Jahan's reign?

Answer:

The enormous sums of money spent by Shah Jahan on magnificent monuments like the Taj Mahal had drained the royal treasury.

Question 8.

Which Mughal emperor assumed leadership of the Revolt of 1857? What happened to him after the Revolt?

Answer:

Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last of the Mughals, assumed leadership of the rebels in the Revolt of 1857 against the British. He was defeated and exiled to Rangoon where he died. The Mughal Empire came to an inglorious end.

F. Answer the following questions briefly.

Question 1.

Several factors were responsible for the decline of the Mughal Empire. In this context answer the following questions:

- (a) How did court politics undermine the authority and prestige of the Mughal empire?
- (b) To what extent was the jagirdari crisis responsible for a further decline of the power of the emperor?
- (c) How did the wars of succession destabilize the Mughal Empire?

Answer:

(a) There were four groups of nobles in the Mughal court- Iranis, Turanis, Afghans and Hindustanis. The Iranis hailed from Persia, the Turanis hailed from Transoxiana, and the Afghans came from the mountainous border regions across the river Indus. The Mughal court was a house sharply divided from within. This resulted in a constant struggle for power among these groups. Their mutual jealousies and rivalries caused great harm to

the Mughal administration and undermined the prestige and authority of the Mughal emperor.

(b) The Mughal officers were given jagirs as payment for their services. Towards the end of the 17th century, there were very few jagirs left. To satisfy the demands of the newly recruited officers, crown lands were converted to jagir lands and given to the nobles. This led to a loss of revenue for the royal treasury and a further decline in the power of the emperor.

(c) After the death of a Mughal ruler, generally there were wars of succession among rival claimants to the throne. These wars proved very costly and destructive. They drained the resources of the empire and made it instable and weak.

Question 2.

With reference to the decline and disintegration of the Mughal empire discuss the following:

- (a) The breakdown of the mansabdari system
- (b) The weaknesses of the Mughal army
- (c) Aurangzeb's religious policy

Answer:

(a) Under this system, mansabdars had to maintain a fixed number of troops. They were given jagirs as the payment for doing so. Later, an increase, in the number of mansabs and a shortage of jagirs led to corruption and inefficiency in the system.

(b) The Mughal army also failed to keep pace with the time. The Mughal rulers did not have a navy and made no efforts to establish one. Their equipment and techniques of warfare were obsolete and ineffective. Nothing was done to reform, modernize and strengthen the army.

(c) His policy of religious intolerance shook the foundations of the empire and resulted in the following:

1. The costly, long-drawn and ruinous Deccan campaign.
2. Numerous wars with the Sikhs, the Marathas, the Jats and the Rajputs.
3. Loss of support of the loyal Rajputs who had earlier contributed greatly to the stability of the Mughal Empire but now became its bitter foes.

Question 3.

To what extent were the following factors responsible for the eventual collapse of the Mughal Empire?

- (a) Economic bankruptcy (b) Foreign invasions (c) Weak successors

Answer:

(a) Economic bankruptcy:

A major cause of the disintegration of the Mughal empire was its economic bankruptcy. The enormous sums of money spent by Shah Jahan on magnificent monuments like the Taj Mahal had drained the royal treasury. Aurangzeb's Deccan campaign was a financial disaster that ruined the empire and made its collapse inevitable.

(b) Foreign invasions:

The invasions of Nadir Shah, the ruler of Persia (Iran), and Ahmad Shah Abdali, the ruler of Afghanistan, shattered the power and prestige of the Mughals. Nadir Shah looted and plundered Delhi and carried away valuable treasures, including the priceless Kohinoor Diamond and the Peacock Throne. Ahmad Shah Abdali plundered northern India repeatedly.

(c) Weak successors:

Aurangzeb ruled over a vast empire which he controlled with an iron hand. His successors were pleasure-loving, weak and inefficient. They were puppets in the hands of powerful, ambitious nobles who controlled the administration. The provincial governors took advantage of the weak government at the center and set up independent kingdoms in the Mughal provinces. This led to the break-up and collapse of the empire.

G. Picture Study:

This is a portrait of the last of the Later Mughals.



1. Identify the Mughal emperor represented in this picture.

Ans. Bahadur Shah Zafar.

2. What part did he play in the Revolt of 1857?

Ans. Role of Bahadur Shah Zafar in the Revolt of 1857:

As the Indian rebellion of 1857 spread, sepoy regiments seized Delhi. Seeking a figure that could unite all Indians, Hindu and Muslim alike, most rebelling Indian kings and the Indian regiments accepted Zafar as the Emperor of India. Under whom the smaller Indian kingdom would unite until the British were defeated. Zafar was the least threatening and least ambitious of monarchs, and the legacy of the Mughal Empire was more acceptable a uniting force to most allied kings than the domination of any other Indian kingdom.

3. What happened to the Mughal Empire after his death?

Ans. The Mughal Empire came to an inglorious end.

4. Mention any four reasons for the decline of the Mughal Empire Explain any two reasons.

Answer:

- (a) Politics in the Mughal court
- (b) Weak Military organization and Administration
- (c) Aurangzeb's Bankruptcy
- (d) Foreign Invasions

(a) Politics in the Mughal court:

There were four groups of nobles in the Mughal court Iranis, Turanis, Afghans and Hindustanis. The Iranis hailed from Persia, the Turanis hailed from Transoxiana, and Afghans came from the mountainous border regions across the Indus. The Mughal court was a house sharply divided from within. This resulted in a constant struggle for power among these groups. Their mutual jealousies and rivalries caused great harm to the Mughal administration and undermined the prestige and authority of the Mughal Emperor.

(b) Economic Bankruptcy: A major cause of the disintegration of the Mughal Empire was its economic bankruptcy. The enormous sums of money spent by Shah Jahan on magnificent monuments like the Taj Mahal had drained the royal treasury. Aurangzeb's Deccan campaign was a financial disaster that ruined the empire and made its collapse inevitable.

OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Question 1.

How did party politics undermine the authority and prestige of the Mughal empire?

Answer:

The Mughal court had four groups of nobles i.e Iranis, Turanis, Afghans and Hindustanis. Due to these groups the Mughal court was sharply divided from within. This resulted in a constant struggle for power, mutual jealousies and rivalries between these groups, led to undermine the authority and prestige of the Mughal Empire.

Question 2.

How did jagirdari crisis lead to a further decline of the emperor's power?

Answer:

During that time, Mughal rulers used to give jagirs to their officers as payment for their services. Due to this, very few jagirs were left. To satisfy the demands of the newly recruited officers, crown lands were converted to jagir lands and given to the nobles. This led to a loss of revenue from the royal treasury and a further decline in the power of the emperor.

Question 3.

What weaknesses in the Mughal army led to the loss of military strength towards the end of the 17th century?

Answer:

The Mughal army at that time was reorganized system. Under this system mansabs had to maintain a fixed number of troops. For this they were given jagirs as payment. An increase in the number of mansabs and a shortage of jagirs led to corruption, inefficiency in the system and decline in the military strength. Further the army was not able to keep pace with the times.

Their equipment and techniques of warfare were out of date and ineffective. No efforts were done to reform, modernize and strengthen the army. This all resulted in weakening of the Mughal army.

Question 4.

To what extent were Aurangzeb responsible for the decline of the Mughal Empire?

Answer:

Aurangzeb was not a successful emperor. He did not realize the importance of religious tolerance and the support and unity of the people for the progress of empire.

His policy towards the Sikhs the Marathas the Jats and the Rajputs lost their support. His Deccan campaign also proved failure and drained wealth of the kingdom too. This all resulted in decline of the Mughals.

Question 5.

To what extent were Aurangzeb's successors responsible of the disintegration of the Mughal Empire?

Answer:

Successors of Aurangzeb were pleasure-loving weak and inefficient. They were puppets in the hands of powerful, ambitious nobles who controlled the administration. The nobles took advantage of the weak government at the center and set up their own independent kingdoms in the Mughal provinces. This led to the breakup and collapse of the empire.