



A Study on Decline and fall of the Mughal Empire

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Abstract:-*The period of the Great Mughals, which began in 1526 with Babur's accession to the throne, ended with the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. Aurangzeb's death marked the end of an era in Indian history. When Aurangzeb died, the empire of the Mughals was the largest in India. Yet, within about fifty years of his death, the Mughal Empire disintegrated. History proved beyond doubt that every Empire that evolved and flourished across centuries created its own grave-diggers. As is the case, the historians of all hues since the 18 Century have debated the causes of the decline of Mughal Empire. The notion of decline envisages a prior state of perfection, efflorescence, harmony, and cohesion, in contrast to corruption, moral degradation, and loss of ethical values, principles, and customs. Hence, historians wish to understand the phenomenon of change and its causes. For instance, social decay, deterioration of the previous order, and belief and long spells of chaos and disorder are considered the causes of such decline.*

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Introduction

History proved beyond doubt that every Empire that evolved and flourished across centuries created its own grave-diggers. As is the case, the historians of all hues since the 18 Century have debated the causes of the decline of Mughal Empire. The notion of decline envisages a prior state of perfection, efflorescence, harmony, and cohesion, in contrast to corruption, moral degradation, and loss of ethical values, principles, and customs. Hence, historians wish to understand the phenomenon of change and its causes. For instance, social decay, deterioration of the previous order, and belief and long spells of chaos and disorder are considered the causes of such decline. The decline of the Mughal Empire has been a subject of controversy among the scholars of medieval Indian history. They hold different views on this complex problem. Here we are going to discuss some most important causes that proved the reason for the downfall of vast Mughal Empire.

Causes of the decline of the Mughal Empire:

The period of the Great Mughals, which began in 1526 with Babur's accession to the throne, ended with the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. Aurangzeb's death marked the end of an era in Indian history. When Aurangzeb died, the empire of the Mughals was the largest in India. Yet, within about fifty years of his death, the Mughal Empire disintegrated. The Mughal Empire, which had reached its zenith during the rule of Shah Jahan and his son, began to decline after the rule of Aurangzeb. In fact, the decline began during the last days of Aurangzeb. There were many causes for the downfall of this great dynasty. Let us view the causes that hastened the fall of the Mughal Empire after Aurangzeb.

The Vastness of the Empire:

The Mughal Empire is growing in size from the time of Akbar. With the conquest of the South by Aurangzeb, it covered almost all India from Kashmir to river Kaveri and from Kabul to

Chittagong it became too vast to be governed from one center at the command of one man. Communications were difficult. Distances were enormous. The Empire therefore began to sink under its own weight.

Over-Centralized Administration:

There were no systems of democratic decentralization in those days. The provincial Government looked to the emperor for orders. The burden of administration grew with the growth of the Empire. Its success depend only the ability of the Emperor. If the Emperor's person declined or his policy turned wrong, the Empire was bound to suffer.

Aurangzeb's responsibility:

Aurangzeb was largely responsible for the downfall of the empire. His predecessors did a lot to win over the loyalties of their subjects, particularly the Rajputs and the Hindus. But Aurangzeb was a fanatic and could not tolerate the non-Muslims. He imposed jazia and forbade the celebration of Hindu festivals. He thus lost the friendship and loyalty of the Rajputs. His execution of the Sikh guru and his enmity with the Marathas forced them to raise arms against him. His excessive obsession with the Deccan also destroyed the Mughal army, the treasury and also adversely affected his health. Being a fanatic Sunni Muslim, he could not tolerate even the Shias. They too turned against him. He laid too much stress on simplicity and was against singing, dancing and drinking which were common habits of the Muslim nobles. They did not like a king who was so much against their ways. Aurangzeb, thus "himself gave a green signal to the forces of decay" and so after his death the mighty empire disintegrated into smaller states.

Aurangzeb failed to realise that the vast Mughal Empire depended on the willing support of the people. He lost the support of the Rajputs who had contributed greatly to the strength of the Empire. They had acted as pillars of support, but Aurangzeb's policy turned them to bitter foes. The wars with the Sikhs, the Marathas, the Jats and the Rajputs had drained the resources of the Mughal Empire.

Weak Successors of Aurangzeb:

The successors of Aurangzeb were weak and became victims of the intrigues and conspiracies of the faction-ridden nobles. They were inefficient generals and incapable of suppressing revolts. The absence of a strong ruler, an efficient bureaucracy and a capable army had made the Mughal Empire weak.

No Definite Law of Succession:

The Mughals did not follow any definite law of succession. After the death of every emperor, there ensued a bloody war of succession amongst his sons. Each one, used nobles and members of the royal family to get the throne thereby dividing the nobles who fought for their self-interest only. This created anarchy. Nobles resorted to conspiracies and made the Mughal power weak and vulnerable.

Empty Treasury and Poor Economy:

The economic stability of the empire was ruined because of the constant wars. Some of the wars did not add even an inch to the Mughal Empire. Besides this, the Mughal rulers spent lavishly on buildings and monuments. Finally, the foreign invasions completely shattered the economy. Shah Jahan's zeal for construction had depleted the treasury. Aurangzeb's long wars in the south had further drained the exchequer.

Moral Degradation of the Soldiers:



An excess of wealth and luxury made the Mughal army lazy, corrupt and inefficient. The soldiers and the generals became pleasure loving and easygoing. Often they proved to be disloyal. Now they could not even go to the battlefield without their train of attendants and women. Sometimes they only fought for money and easily succumbed to bribes.

Invasions:

Foreign invasions sapped the remaining strength of the Mughals and hastened the process of disintegration. The invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali resulted in further drainage of wealth. These invasions shook the very stability of the empire.

Coming of the Europeans:

The Europeans, especially the British, played an important role in putting an end to the Mughal Empire. They first obtained a freeman to trade with India, but gradually began interfering in Indian politics and gradually set up a British empire in India that lasted for 200 years.

Size of the Empire and Challenge from Regional Powers:

The Mughal Empire had become too large to be controlled by any ruler from one centre i.e. Delhi. The Great Mughals were efficient and exercised control over ministers and army, but the later Mughals were poor administrators. As a result, the distant provinces became independent. The rise of independent states led to the disintegration of the Mughal Empire.

Other popular theories suggest that it was Aurangzeb's southern conquest which had sealed the fate of the empire in the long run. Before his reign, the empire had a completely different look with the southern part of India left untouched. When he commenced his campaign on southern expansion, he hadn't taken into account the commission of new nobles. By the end of the conquest there were many new nobles "chasing an almost static pool of resources" (Pearson 221). Thus this was putting strain on the economy and the nobles couldn't afford to keep well equipped armies, thus crumbling the empire's military prowess from within.

Also important to highlight is the absence of a navy force. The mughal war machine totally lacked in this department and as it can be imagined, this was a serious disadvantage. "Had the Mughal Empire been powerful at sea, it probably could have checked the advance of the European, might have made greater headway against the Maratha power, and have retarded and circumscribed the influences directed towards its own ruin" (Edwardes and Garrett 249). And of course, there was the widespread corruption and laziness which had gripped all the later emperors. There is not much to be said about this as it generally accompanied their road to abysmal leadership. This led to ineffectiveness of those men to make the right decisions.

Ultimately the fall of the Timurid Empire can be attributed to all of the reasons mentioned in this paper, but the four big steps which lead to it are the four criteria stated at the beginning. Also, an important acknowledgement this paper makes is that the empire was finished long before its actual end date of 1848. Between the second half of 17th century and the first half of 18th century, the empire was shattered beyond repair. In sporting terms, the whole scene after Aurangzeb was a dead rubber in relation to the survival of the empire. The destiny of the empire had already been decided and a miracle would be required in order to reverse the outcome. The Mughal Empire was on a fast track to dissolution regardless of whatever that was happening at the time.

Perhaps the top echelon of the empire should have tried to emulate Tipu Sultan, the ruler of the kingdom of Mysore. At the height of the Mughal Empire, the whole of subcontinent was



under its rule except the Kingdom of Mysore, at the southern tip of modern day India. Education quality and literacy rates were the highest in this region and Tipu Sultan had incorporated European technology into his battalion. And thus quite explicable, Tipu had successfully defended his kingdom from the British invasions.

Finally in 1799, in the fourth Anglo-Mysore war, he was defeated with the help of the Marathas and Hydrebadis of the Nizam's dominion. Till then he held autonomy over his region which the Mughals .at the time could only dream about, let alone put up a fight against the British forces. Hence the most important lesson to be learned perhaps is the need for constant innovation and adaptation. The Mughal dynasty not only failed in these aspects over time but fatally refused to correct itself on its misguided policies. Because the empire was not democratic, it always depended on solid leadership to guide it through tough times. Though the first six emperors of the empire had skills, otherwise the empire wouldn't have flourished and expanded like it did; by the end of end of Aurangzeb's reign, the empire was like a spent bullet. Because of what went down in history, The Mughal Empire had very slim chances of survival.

To conclude, it can be said that No empire in history is survived forever. The Mughal Empire of India was no exception. It declined for various reasons and several persons, situations and factors are responsible for it. Where large number of people consider Auranjeb and his policies which led to the decline of mughal dynasty.

References

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External links

- Aurangzeb, as he was according to Mughal Records
- British India