UNIT 14 : MUGHAL ADMINISTRATION AND DOWNFALL OF THE MUGHALS

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14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to:

- explain the Mughal administration and the principles behind it,
- discuss the administration at the central and provincial level,
- describe the land assignment system under the Mughals- the jagirdari and mansabdari system.
- discuss the downfall of the Mughals.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

The development of Mughal administration was primarily the work of Akbar. The ideas and principles on which it evolved were different from those of the Delhi Sultanate. Due to lack of time and opportunity in case of Babur and lack of inclination and ability in case of Humayun, an elaborate system of civil government was not possible. It was largely due to the establishment of an administrative apparatus by Sher Shah that Akbar could

lay the edifice of a systematic structure in administration. The Mughal state was essentially military in nature where the word of the Emperor was the law. The administrative structure was highly centralized as viewed by historians like Irfan Habib, Athar Ali, etc. This Unit will focus on the Mughal administration

14.3 CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

The head of the Mughal administrative apparatus was the Emperor. Though the king enjoyed absolute power, he appointed a number of officers in different departments of the government for the transactions of the innumerable affairs.

From 1526 to 1560, i.e., from the time of Babur to the first four years of the reign of Akbar, the office of Wazir or Wakil enjoyed great power. At the time of Bairam Khan's regency (1556-60), the office of the Wazir enjoyed unlimited power. As Akbar took the financial power of the Wakil from Bairam Khan, the office lost its importance.

The main departments of the state were usually four. The head of exchequer was the Diwan who was usually the highest officer in the state, being in sole charge of revenue and finance. He personally inspected all financial transactions, payments in all departments, and maintained direct contact with the provincial Diwan.

The office of military pay and accounts was entrusted to Mir Bakshi, who discharged various duties. While he was the Paymaster-General of all the officers of the state, who "theoretically belonged to the military department", he was also responsible for recruiting soldiers of the army and for maintaining the list of Mansabdars and other high officials. When preparing for a battle, he presented a complete master-roll of the army before the Emperor. Khan-i-Saman was the officer of the Imperial Household department who looked into all matters "in reference to both great and small things".

The last but not the least important office was held by Sadr-us Sudur

who was the head of religious endowments and charity and also the minister of education. Before Shah Jahan, the office of Chief Qazi and Sadr-us Sudur were combined into one- Sadr who acted as the Chief Qazi. Aurangzeb separated these two offices and appointed two different persons to hold these posts.

Secondary in importance were the heads of departments like Mustaufi (Auditor General), Chief Mufti (Legal Adviser), Chief Muhtasib (Censor of Public Morals) and Daroga-i-Dak Choki (Officer of Intelligence and Postal Department). The other officials, somewhat inferior in status to those mentioned above, were the Mir Atish or Daroga-i-Topkhana (Superintendent of Artillery), Nazir-i- Buyutat (Superintendent of Imperial Workshop), Mir Barak (Superintendent of Forests), Mir Arz (Officer who presented petitions to the Emperor) and Mir Tazak (Master of Ceremonies).

14.4 PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

For the purpose of smooth administration and revenue collection, the empire was divided into several provinces known as Subas. Akbar divided his empire into twelve Subas. Later, when he conquered new provinces in the Deccan, the number rose to fifteen towards the close of his reign. Subsequently they rose to seventeen at the time of Jahangir's reign, to nineteen in the time of Shah Jahan and to twenty-one at the time of Aurangzeb.

The administrative structure of the province during the Mughal rule was exactly the miniature of the central government. The head of a Suba was Subedar who was appointed directly by the Emperor. He was the head of the civil as well as military administration of each Suba. The provincial Diwan was the head of the revenue department of the province and was appointed by the Emperor. He was an independent officer who answered all questions relating to provincial finance.

The provincial Bakshi looked after the military establishment. He also kept an account of the salaries and emoluments of all Mansabdars. Provincial Sadr, Qazi, Buyutat, Muhtasib, etc had to discharge the same duties like

their counterparts at the centre. Besides, in every Suba, Daroga-i-Dag Choki was established for conducting intelligence and postal system, Waqai Navis and Waqai Nigars were appointed for supply of reports directly to the king and some Sawanih Nigars were also recruited for maintaining confidential reports supplied to the king.

- **LOCAL ADMINISTRATION**

The administration below the Subas, were divided into Sarkars and the Sarkars were subdivided into Parganas: Faujdar was the chief executive head of a Sarkar whose main duty was to maintain the law and order under his jurisdiction and the execution of royal decrees and regulations. In addition, he had to keep the powerful Zamindars under check. The next important officer of a Sarkar was the revenue collector known as Amalguzar. Some Thanas were established in disturbed areas and in and around the cities for preservation of law and order. These were headed by Thanedars.

A Shiqdar was in the charge of the general administration of a Pargana and maintain law and order. He was assisted by an Amil (Revenue Collector), an Amin (Revenue Assessor), a Potadar (Treasurer), Qanungo (Record Keeper of Land) and few Bitikchis (Writers or Clerks).

A village was the lowest administrative unit in the Mughal system of administration. The village head was known as Muqaddam. He was assisted by the Patwari, who took care of the village revenue records. At this level, the Mughals followed almost the same pattern of administration as it was under Sher Shah. The administration of the urban areas was entrusted to Kotwal who was appointed by the centre. His duty was prevention of crime, prevention of social abuses, control of the market, care and disposal of heirless properties, etc.

The forts of the Mughals, which were known as Qilas, were located at strategically important places where small towns grew up due to erection of huge garrisons. To administer the Qilas, some high ranked Mansabdars were usually appointed as Qiladars for its administration. One Mutasaddi was appointed to administer the ports. This office was auctioned in some cases and given to the highest bidder.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

1. Who separated the office of Chief Qazi and Sadr-us Sudur?

   .....

2. What was the duty of the Subedar?

   .....

3. Who was Mutasaddi?

   .....

- **Mughal Judicial System**

The Mughal rulers possessed a great sense of justice and tried to establish an efficient system of judicial administration. Initially, they followed the judicial system based on Islamic law of the Sultanate period under which the subjects were divided into two classes- Believers and Zimmis, the latter being not recognized as citizens of the country. It was Akbar who did not strictly adhere to the Islamic theory of kingship and made some changes in the judicial system.

At the apex of the judicial administration stood the king, who was considered to be the fountain of justice. He held his court on fixed days of the week and personally decided all the important cases. The king alone enjoyed the right to award death sentences. Next to the king's court stood the courts of Sadr-us-Sadur which decide the religious cases and the Qazi-ul-Qzat which decide all other cases.

There was separate judicial machinery at the provincial level. The chief responsibility of judicial administration rested with the Subedar, the Diwan and the Qazi. The Subedar decided all the criminal cases and punished thieves, robbers, rebels, etc. The civil cases were decided by the Diwan. The court of the Qazi also enjoyed wide judicial powers. The Qazi with the help of officials like Mufti and Miradi discharged both civil and criminal justice on the Hindus and the Muslims.

At the Sarkar and Pargana level, the Siqdar acted as the chief judicial officer and tried all criminal cases. The civil cases were tried by the Amil. The Qazi and the Kotwal too enjoyed the right to try certain types of civil and criminal cases. The lowest unit of judicial administration was the Panchayat.

No codified laws existed in the Mughal judicial system. The cases of the Muslims were decided on the basis of Quranic injunctions, hadiths or sayings of the prophet, fatwas or decrees of the eminent judges, etc. In case of the Hindus the cases were decided in accordance with their customary and traditional laws. However, in criminal cases some identical laws existed for the members of the two communities. The political cases were tried by special courts consisting of civil and military officials.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

4. Name the lowest unit of judicial administration.

   .....

5. Define Hadith?

   .....

6. Who acted as the chief judicial officer at the Sarkar and Pargana level?

   .....

14.5 JAGIRDARI SYSTEM

Jagirdari system during the time of the Mughals was a continuation of the earlier iqta system that formed a part of the feudal structure prior to the Mughal period. It was an administrative mechanism which involved revenue assignments that was transferrable during the Sultanate days. By this system, the ruling class of a particular region was responsible for the management of revenue appropriation under the direct supervision of the central authority without having any hereditary rights over the regions falling under their control.

Earlier permanent and hereditary rights controlled the revenue assignments as the son succeeded to the official posts. However, under the Lodis, the Afghan nobles were given such revenue assignments and derived only partly from the king's favour. This Mughal system of revenue assignment is identified as Jagirs and the assignee is known as Jagirdar. Unlike the iqta system which was administrative cum fiscal arrangement, jagirdari system under the Mughals was purely revenue based assignment.

Akbar divided the land into two categories- Khalisa and Jagir. Land revenue of Khalisa land went directly to the royal treasury whereas Jagirs were assigned to the Jagirdars according to their rank. Those Mansabdars who received cash payment were known as Naqdi. Jagirs were usually granted to the Mansabdars and the governing class of the empire.

The Jagirs under the Mughals were transferable after three or four years and no Jagirdar was allowed to retain the same Jagir for a long time. This feature of the system not only kept a check on the Jagirdars but also helped taking long-term measures for the development of the areas by the Jagirdars.

Generally there were four types of Jagirs - (a) those which were given in lieu of pay known as Jagir Tankha, (b) those which were given to a person on certain conditions called Mashrut Jagirs, (c) those which were independent and involved no obligation in service termed Inam Jagir and (d) those which were assigned to Zamindars in their own homeland known as Watan Jagir. The last named was the only exception to the general system of transfer of Jagir system.

The increase in the number of Mansabdars and the limited availability of land as well as the administrative and financial disorder of the country caused a crisis in the Jagirdari system in the later part of the reign of Aurangzeb. Many of those who were appointed as Mansabdars found it hard to get their Jagirs. The Jagirdari system was one of the important causes of the agrarian crisis in the Mughal Empire.

Though the term jagir does not occur in the official paper before Akbar, it began to be used gradually after Akbar. The term jagir has been used in

varying frequencies- more frequently since 1561 but by 1575, it had declined. This may be due to the changing administrative jargon for different assignment in the original documents. During the time of Babur, wajah was used and during the first four years of Akbar's reign vague expressions like hukumat, sardari, dawari, hirasat etc were used.

The marking of difference between the revenue assignment and holding administrative posts may have been the outcome of Sher Shah's policy of appointing sarkar-level military commanders. This policy was carried forward by Islam Shah who made an attempt to put all soldiers serving under him on cash salaries.

The jagirs of the leading nobles were located strictly within the territory controlled by him. However, the territory extended much beyond the revenue assignment.

At times there were disputes regarding the control of revenue as to whether the senior commander would control the revenue of his territory or only his personal jagir. This growing tension led to conflict between central authority and the regional commanders.

Towards 1575 the jagir system assumed certain features. One jagir of a noble was conceived as fixed income against specific methods and not a portion of the revenue collected from the territories under his charge. Secondly, the central diwan had the supreme authority to decide the value of the jagirs (locale and nominal) of the nobles or those serving under the superior hakims.

LET US KNOW



Ali Quli Khan (hakim) of Jaunpur assigned sarkar Banaras to his brother Bahadur Khan and made it formally on behalf of the king. This is a single exceptional case where an actual decision on assignment was taken without any prior authorization from the central authority, as mentioned by Bayazid Bayat in the Tazkira-i-Humayun-wa-Akbar.

Jagirs began to be distributed among the high nobles at the presence of a central diwan. Abul Fazl reports this in connection with the assignment of the Malwa in 1562. And the value of the jagir and locale was defined through sanads issued by the central diwan. And failure to abide by the procedure was considered an offence and not acceptable.

Until 1560, the jagir of a noble was never assigned in parts against the partial assesed income (Jama) of two or more parganas. The jagirs were settled in terms of the assesed income (Jama) of the parganas against which it was assigned. In the initial years of Akbar's rule, the central share in the revenue of the different regions was fixed but while discharging the responsibility of collecting and transmitting to the treasury the nobles misappropriated it. This was perhaps the reason behind the depletion of treasury towards the beginning of 1561.

The jagirs of the nobles belonging to powerful clans were concentrated in particular regions. Most of the jagirs were distributed among the members of the same clan like the Uzbeks in Jaunpur, Mirzas in Sambhal, Jalairs in Lucknow and Awadh, Qaqshals in Kara, Manikpur and the Atka clan in Panjab. This led to the slowing down of the process of the transfer of jagirs.

From around 1561 certain changes were introduced in the way jagirs were assigned. The jagirs were assigned in fragments over a number of parganas and Ain-i-dahsala testifies to the fragmentation of the jagirs.

14.6 MANSABDARI SYSTEM

The basis of civil and military administration under the Mughals was the Mansabdari system which was introduced by Akbar who himself borrowed it from Persia.

The term Mansab literally means the rank of its holder (Mansabdars) in the official ladder in the Mughal system of administration. From that angle, the Mansabdars were the paid-service officers of the Mughals. On the basis of merit or service to the state, Mansabs were given to both civil and military officers and hence they formed an integral part of the Mughal bureaucracy.

Thus the Mansabdars belonged to the civil and the military department. The Mansabdars could be transferred from the civil to the military department and vice versa. The Mansabdars had to supply certain number of soldiers to the state according to their rank. In the time of Akbar the Mansabdars were classified into 33 grades, from commanders of 10 to 10,000 soldiers. Generally Mansab in the rank of 7,000 and above was reserved for person like princes or other members of royal family.

The title of Mansabdar was assigned to the high officials while the less superior officers were given the title of Rouzinder.

There were two important characteristic features. Firstly, in broader sense all the Mansabdars were subordinate to the king. That means, in an expedition, a Mansabdar of lower rank had to obey the Mansabdar of higher rank in matters of war. Secondly, the Mughal Mansabdars were known by the number of ranks identified as - Zat and Sawar. Zat indicated the number of horses, carts, elephants etc to be maintained by a Mansabdar. Sawar determined the number of horsemen the Mansabdar had to furnish or maintain. Sawar rank was either equal or lower than that of the Zat. Hence, the position of the Mansabdar was determined by the Zat number, not that of Sawar. For example, Mansabdar with 4000 Zat and 2000 Sawar was higher in rank than a Mansabdar of 3000 Zat and 3000 Sawar.

The Mansab rank under the Mughals was not hereditary. The son of a Mansabdar did not inherit the rank from his father. Such grant depended on the will of the Emperor. Another important feature of the system was the law of escheat (zabti), according to which when a Mansabdar died, all his property was confiscated by the king. This measure was introduced so that the Mansabdars could not exploit the people at will. Regarding the payment of the Mansabdars, the system of payment in cash or in assignment of a Jagir existed. Generally, a Mansabdar preferred a Jagir to cash payment due to social status associated with it.

The Mansabdari system, introduced by Akbar, was a unique feature of the administrative system of the Mughal Empire. But it was, no doubt, a complex system.

There were gradations of the Mansab holders. Mansabdars holding the rank of one Hazari or above were termed as "Omrah" and those below a Hazari were termed Mansabdars. They performed the same type of duties. There were three classes of Mansabdars. (a) If the Zat and Sawar ranks were equal the Mansabdar belonged to the first class. (b) If the Sawar rank was half of his Zat rank, the Mansabdar belonged to the second class. (c) If the sawar rank was less than half the Zat rank or there was no Sawar rank at all, then the Mansabdar would belong to the third class.

The Mughals stressed on the central authority of the ruler in maintaining order within the Empire. The Mansabdari system became the means through which chieftains, clan leaders and aristocrats who commanded considerable status and power were inducted into the nobility. The mansabdar was to report only to the Emperor rather than to another official of a higher mansab or rank. The Emperor wielded much control over the officials through the frequent attendance of the nobles. This enabled the nobles to maintain their elite status. The nobles could not assert their power through hereditary claims unlike the times of Tughlaqs and the Lodhis. Akbar did away with this practice and the rank of an officer ended with the death of the officer. Moreover, the mansabdars, were transferred to prevent any territorial consolidation of power. The Mughal princes were given ranks subordinate to the Emperor. The system managed to draw into the fold of the Mughal army the maximum number of military recruits.

It allowed optimal absorption of warlords and recruits. Rewards and high maintenance grants were offered as incentives to warlords who enlisted superior horse-breeds.

Due to the indirect recruitment process the Mughal grasp or hold over Indian military power remained tenuous throughout. There were no strict regulations and control. Instead, the number of mansabdar increased leading to the expansion of the empire to newer frontiers.

The Mansabdars posted in the Deccan, received jagirs for only 3 or 4 months. The increase in the mansab was far greater than the growth in the jama. It was to cope with this situation that the zat and sawar salaries were reduced

to a large scale and it posed a military and financial problem. Akbar aimed to broaden the base of his rule by establishing a personalized and semi-bureaucratic relationship with the Hindu chieftains and Muslim nobles. The mansabdars under Akbar were mostly Persians, Turanis, Muslims born in India and the Rajput chieftains.

The lowest ranking mansabdar was a commander of 10 cavalry and the highest ranking mansabdars was a commander of 10,000 cavalry. In Akbar's time most of the mansabdars above the rank of 5000 were his sons.

LET US KNOW



Abdul Kadir Badauni (a chronicler in Akbar's time) had written that the contingent of a mansabdar consisted of Khas Khailan (his personal dependents) as well as bargirs, who were mercenaries.

On the basis of their performance mansabdars were either promoted to higher ranks or demoted to lower ranks. Akbar introduced descriptive roll system and pay was dependent on the inspection of these rolls by imperial inspectors. Branding horse system was made compulsory to prevent borrowing of horses between the mansabdars. Most high ranking mansabdars were governors of subas. The sons inherited a lower mansab than his father.

Sir Thomas Roe mentions that the children of the mansabdar inherited a small fortune like, 'horses, staff and some stock". Thus, the law of escheat worked well as it kept the mansabdars away for indulging in corruption and other acts of high handedness. However, this also led to an increasing tendency among the mansabdars to indulge in reckless expenditure. According to J.N. Sarkar, the law of escheat made the nobles a selfish band quick to join a winning side in every war of succession in order to keep safe their material possessions as their entitlements were subject to the pleasure of the king.

14.7 DOWNFALL OF THE MUGHALS

The vast Empire of the great Mughals founded by Babur reached its peak under Akbar. Following Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb continued to rule effectively and maintained the integrity of the Empire. They continued to rule until the arrival of the British. But the signs of decline were visible much earlier during Aurangzeb's rule and the later Mughal Emperors struggled hard to hold their power in the face of the rise of the British sea power, followed by the French until its final collapse at the hands of the East India Company, when a new period of colonial rule began. For two hundred years, the great Mughals brought India under their unified rule but various factors combined to bring about the downfall of the great Empire.

The factors leading to the downfall of the Mughal empire is given below:

a) Despotic Rule:

The Mughal government can be called a centralized despotism. In such a system, everything depended upon the personality and character of the monarch. Thus, as long as the king was in a position to exercise control, the country was safe, but a little slackness on his part resulted in chaos and confusion. The first six Mughal emperors were men of ability with strength of character. But Aurangzeb's successors, from Bahadur Shah I to Bahadur Shah II, were mostly worthless. The affairs of the government thus went into the hands of the unscrupulous ministers. This naturally gave rise to chaos, intrigues and corruption which, in turn, produced administrative confusion rendering the foundation of the empire weak and vulnerable.

b) Demoralisation of the Army:

One of the most important causes of the downfall of the Mughal Empire was the degeneration of the army which by its origin and composition was defective. The Mughal army consisted chiefly of contingents recruited by the high officers and the nobles. They were assigned revenues of large tracts of land for their maintenance. There was no bond of closeness between

the emperor and the individual soldiers. As the later Mughal emperors were weak, the powerful nobles began to convert the assignments which they held for maintaining troops into hereditary assets. Thus, the weakness in the army led to the fall of the Mughal Empire.

c) Absence of a Definite Law of Succession:

Under the Mughals, there was no uniform law of succession. As such, the death of a king resulted in a war of succession. Such fratricidal struggles for the throne had a very demoralizing effect on the stability of the government. The royal palace and court became the centres of intrigues and plots. Confusion reigned everywhere. Many provinces became independent. Thus, with the loss of money and manpower, every new ruler who ascended the throne had to make a fresh beginning.

d) Deterioration of the Nobility:

The degeneration of the rulers led to the degeneration of the nobility. Under the early Mughals, the nobles distinguished themselves both in war and peace. They also performed useful functions in the administration. The history of India at the time of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan was made by nobles like Bairam Khan, Munim Khan, Muzaffar Khan, Itimad-ud-Daulah, Mahabat Khan, Asaf Khan, Sadullah Khan, etc. But with decline of the power of the later Mughal emperors, corruption also set in the character of the nobility.

The *mansabdars* and the nobles left no stone unturned to cheat the government. The nobles were split up into factions like *Turani, Irani,* etc. These nobles quarrelled with one another for personal ascendancy. During the time of Nadir Shah's invasion, Sadat Khan, an Irani noble, betrayed his master. Thus, the degeneration of the Mughal nobility was also responsible for the downfall of the empire. With the state office becoming hereditary, there was no opportunity of promotion for men of courage and capability. Some of the nobles had become addicted to the live of extravagance and hence they turned into corrupt officials.

LET US KNOW



The nobles at the court of the later Mughal emperors were divided into two main factions' viz. *Turani* or Central Asian faction and *Irani* or Persian faction. The *Turanis* were Sunnis, while the *Iranis* were *Shias.*

e) Economic Bankruptcy:

Another cause of the fall of the Mughal Empire is to be ascribed to its economic bankruptcy. Akbar had established an excellent financial system under which the government had become rich and the people had led fairly comfortable lives. But after his death, his revenue system, which dealt directly with the tillers of the soil, began to fall into disuse. Later Mughal rulers spent large sums of money in unproductive works. During Shah Jahan's time, huge amounts of money were spent on maintaining the standard of the Durbar and also on building activities. To meet the increasing expenditure, he raised the state demand to one-half of the produce of the soil. Due to such heavy burden of taxation, thousands of cultivators began deserting their fields. Those who remained were compelled by force to carry on their age-old cultivation. Under Aurangzeb, the royal treasury became more depleted. His long drawn-out campaigns in the Deccan ruined the economy of the country.

f) Aurangzeb's Religious Policy:

Aurangzeb's religious policy was largely responsible for the downfall of the Mughal Empire. His policy of religious persecution of the Hindus, who formed the bulk of the population of the country, hastened the fall of his dynasty. Akbar won over the Hindus by a policy of religious toleration. He had enlisted Hindu warrior tribes, chiefly the Rajputs, as reliable defenders of his throne.

On the contrary, Aurangzeb's intolerance and senseless destruction of the Hindu temples antagonized the vast majority of the Hindu population. He re-imposed the hated *jiziya* on the Hindus. As a consequence, the Rajputs, the Sikhs, the Jats and the Marathas rose in revolt against the

Mughal rule. He distrusted the Rajputs and thus deprived himself of the services of the force that had been a boon to the empire prior to him.

Moreover, Aurangzeb turned against the Shias with as much bitterness as against the Hindus. He not only discriminated against the Shias in the matter of state employment, but even tried to put down their teachings, schools and religious practices. The execution of the Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur was also a great blunder on the part of Aurangzeb which incited the Sikhs. Thus, his religious policy only managed to alienate the Hindus while hastening the fall of the Mughal Empire.

LET US KNOW



The Sikhs under Guru Govind Singh vowed vengeance against the Mughals. It was because Emperor Aurangzeb brutally put their ninth Guru, Guru Teg Bahadur to death. He converted his followers into a militant sect by establishing the *Khalsa* which became a potent factor in the downfall of the Mughals.

g) Crisis in the Jagirdari and Mansabdari System

In the previous Unit (Unit 13), we have discussed the Jagirdari system under the Mughals which was linked to the economic and social fabric of medieval India. The Mughals had become heavily dependent on the group of khud-kasht (powerful peasants who had hereditary rights over their land), the zamindars and the jagirdars. Though the rulers tried to curb the power of these groups, their efforts paid no results instead there were new crises rising. In connection with the crisis of the Jagirdari system which was a contributing factor in the decline of the Empire, the following points are worth mentioning.

- The size of the nobility was growing in large number. There were the "adventurers" pouring in from Central Asia, the khanazads (sons and relatives of the mansab holders), the shaikhzadas (sons of religious leaders or divines) and others who were looking for appointments from the ruler.
- The growth of the "lobbyist" group was also another crisis as holding

of a mansab was seen as a sign of social privilege.

- There was a "growth of inadequate availability of revenue" resources and the failure was due to the lack of willingness on the part of the Mughal rulers to carry out any radical changes in the agrarian relations. They put all their efforts in pleasing the powerful landed class, the zamindars, the khudkasht peasants and the jagirdars.
- The crisis was at its height during the time of Aurangzeb who repeatedly turned down all requests to grant jagirs to all the new applicants.
- The manner in which the reserved land or khalisa were demarcated created problems. The mansabdars were often allotted zor talab jagirs where it was difficult to raise revenue. Even when there was no productivity and the realization of revenue amounted to nothing, the mansabdars were forced to make payment.
- The main crisis of the jagirdari system was its failure in maintaining law and order and its inability to collect the revenue. The decay of the practice of frequent transfers of the jagirs and no administrative checks on the powerful jagirdars and mansabdars also paved the way for the disintegration of the Mughal Empire.

h) Deccan Policy of Aurangzeb:

Aurangzeb's Deccan policy gave a death blow to the Mughal Empire. His Deccan policy caused the destruction of some of their best soldiers and undermined the power and prestige of the empire. His aim was to crush the Maratha power by bringing the Deccan states under his control. Thus, Aurangzeb destroyed the Shia kingdom of Bijapur in 1686 and Golkunda in 1687 and waged a long war against the Marathas. His long drawn-out campaign against the Marathas ruined the finances of the state and undermined his prestige. Moreover, his prolonged absence from the capital weakened the foundation of his government which rested mainly on close personal supervision. The provincial governors took advantage of his absence and failed to regularly send revenues while some others declared their

independence.

V. A. Smith has rightly mentioned that the Deccan became the grave of Aurangzeb's reputation as well as his body.

i) Vastness of the Empire:

During Aurangzeb's time, the Mughal Empire had become so vast that it was practically impossible to govern it from one centre under medieval conditions of transport and communication. The far-flung provinces were difficult to be managed from one central point. As a result, they suffered from mal-administration and mis-government as testified by the European travellers who visited India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Under the later Mughals, the central control upon the provinces became further weak. This hastened the forces of disintegration.

j) Rise of Independent Kingdoms:

Taking advantage of the weakness of the later Mughals, many ambitious provincial governors declared their independence. During Muhammad Shah's reign, Nizam-ul-Mulk proclaimed himself an independent ruler of the six subas of the Deccan. Sadat Khan established an independent dynasty in Awadh. Ali Vardi Khan became independent in Bengal. The Marathas had won their independence long before this time. Next, they established their supremacy over the Mughal provinces of Malwa, Gujarat and Bundelkhand and sought to bring the entire country under their domination.

k) Rise of the East India Company:

The rise of the East India Company gave a blow to the Mughal Empire. The Mughals had failed to keep pace with time as far as military tactics and weapons of war were concerned. The British, with the help of advanced and sophisticated arms, new system of warfare and discipline, became the supreme power in India. The Mughals did not care to strengthen their sea power, whereas the British navy was very strong and efficient. Thus, the rise of the British power in India is one of the most important causes of the downfall of the Mughal Empire.

l) Gap between the Rulers and the Ruled:

Throughout the Mughal period, there was an ever-growing gap between the rulers and the ruled. Unfortunately, barring a few rulers like Akbar, no sincere and positive step was taken by others to bridge this gap. Consequently mass popular support which was so necessary for the stability of the kingdom was gradually disappearing towards the last days of the Mughal Empire.

) External factors for the decline of the Mughals:

To make matters worse, the invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali broke the backbone of the Mughal Empire. The power, wealth and prestige of the empire were damaged beyond repair by Nadir Shah who invaded India during the rule of Muhammad Shah. He seized the throne of Persia in 1736 and then turned his attention towards India. In 1739, he marched to Delhi and after meeting the imperial army at Karnal near Panipath, he entered Delhi and ransacked the city. He then returned to Persia with a huge booty including the world famous Peacock Throne and the Koh-i-Nur diamond, all estimated at nearly seventy crores of rupees. The invasion of Nadir Shah exposed the internal weakness of the Mughal Empire and completely destroyed its prestige. In fact, Nadir Shah's invasion dealt a death blow to the Mughal Empire.

This was followed by seven invasions led by his lieutenant, Ahmed Shah Abdali who had become the king of Kabul after the assassination of Nadir Shah. Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded the Punjab in 1748. In 1761, he inflicted a crushing defeat on the Marathas at the third battle of Panipath. The defeat of the Marathas had far-reaching consequences. The imperialistic policies of the Marathas received a severe setback. Moreover, the defeat of the Marathas gave the English the opportunity they needed to consolidate their position in Bengal. All these events affected the fortune of the Mughal Empire.

The invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali took a heavy toll on human lives besides draining out vast resources of the imperial

treasury. It laid open the floodgates of administrative chaos and political bankruptcy. It also left India vulnerable to forces from within and without.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

1. Who re-imposed *jizya?*

   .....

2. In which year did Nadir Shah invade Delhi?

   .....

3. Name the ninth guru of the Sikhs?

   .....

4. When was the third battle of Panipat fought?

   .....



14.8 LET US SUM UP

After going through this Unit, you have learnt that–

- The king enjoyed absolute power, but a decentralised form of government existed during the Mughal period.
- The empire was divided and sub-divided into several levels functioning under capable administrators and officers.
- The jagirdari and mansabdari system were an integral part of the Mughal administration and it formed the base of civil and military administration.



14.9 FURTHER READING

- Roy, Kaushik. (2013). *Military manpower, Armies and Warfare in South Asia.* New York, USA: Taylor and Francis.
- Chandra, Satish. (Reprint 2008). *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals, Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526) Part one.* New Delhi, India:

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- Prasad, Ishwari. (1965). *A Short History of Muslim Rule in India.* Allahabad, India: The Indian Press Ltd. (2nd Edition)
- Richards, John F. (1996). *The Mughal Empire.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Habib, Irfan (2000). *Agrarian system of Mughal India, 1556-1707.* (3rd edition). Bombay, India: Oxford University Press.

14.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Q No. 1: Aurangzeb

Answers to Q No. 2: He was in charge of the civil as well as military administration of a Suba.

Answers to Q No. 3: He was in charge of the administration of the ports.

Answers to Q No. 4: Panchayat

Answers to Q No. 5: Sayings of the Prophet

Answers to Q No. 6: Siqdar

Answers to Q No. 7: Zat indicated the number of horses, carts, elephants etc to be maintained by a Mansabdar.

Answers to Q No. 8: Ain-i-dahsala

Answers to Q No. 9: Watan jagir

14.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions (answer each within 50 words):

Q.1. What was the function of the Diwan?

Q.2. What kinds of cases were decided by Qazi-ul-Qazat?

Q.3. Who was the main architect of Mughal administrative system?

Q.4. How many Subas were there in Deccan under Aurangzeb?

(B) Short Questions (answer each within 150 words):

Q.1. How was justice delivered in the absence of any codified law?

Q.2. How was the state share of revenue determined?

(C) Long Questions (answer each within 300-500 words):

Q.1. Show how the provincial administration of the Mughals resembles the central administration.

Q.2. Discuss the salient features of the Mughal administration.

Q.3. Discuss the Jagirdari system.

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