

Medieval India: Mughal Dynasty (NCERT)

Back after a short break! Our team members have been working on Clear IAS Prelims Mock Tests – timed test series with performance analysis, the only one of its kind – which will be launched soon! Also, a detailed analysis of Budget is in the making. As of now, let's focus back to our free online study materials on Indian History.

In this article on Medieval India, we plan to cover the Mughal Dynasty. The reference material for this post is NCERT History text for Class 7 (Our past -1). Only main points from the chapters are compiled below. These points might come quite handy during preparation of Prelims and Mains to get a quick grasp of the subject.

The Mughal Dynasty

- From the latter half of the 16th century they expanded their kingdom from Agra and Delhi until in the 17th century they controlled nearly all of the subcontinent.
- They imposed structures of administration and ideas of governance that outlasted their rule, leaving a political legacy that succeeding rulers of the subcontinent could not ignore.

Babur

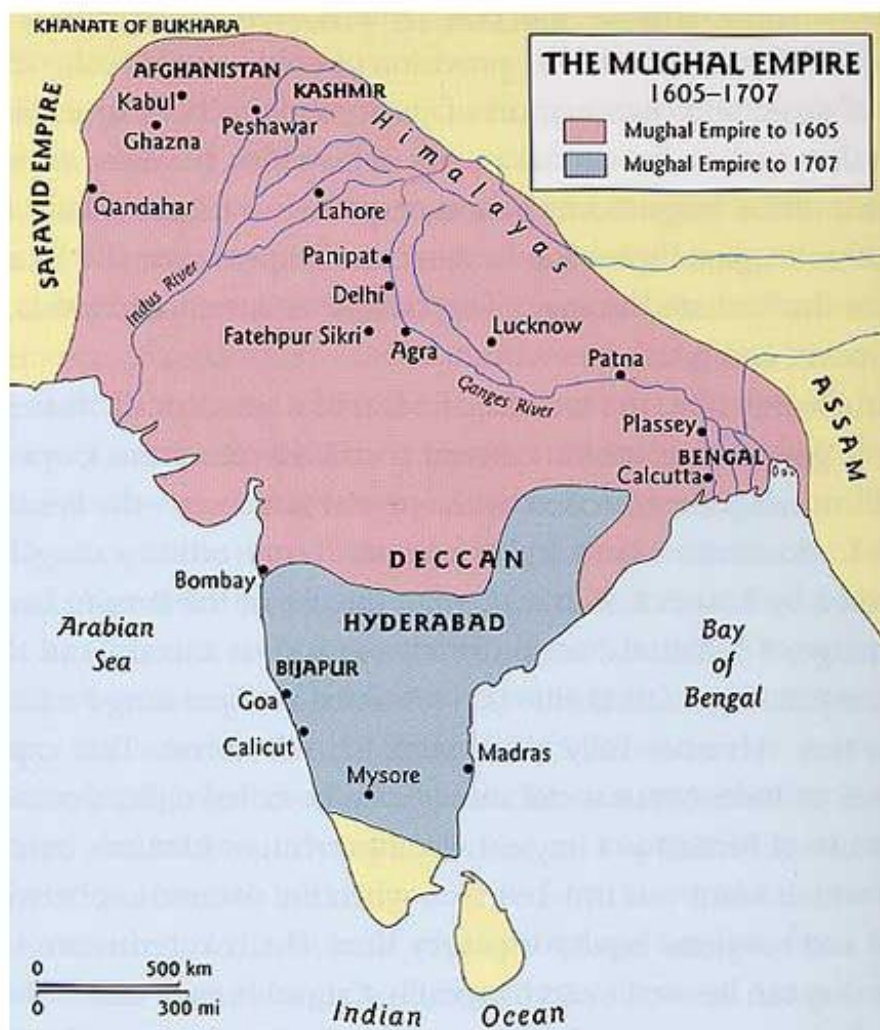
- The first Mughal emperor (1526- 1530)
- Political situation in north-west India was suitable for Babur to enter India .
- Sikhandar Lodi died in 1517 and Ibrahim Lodi succeeded him. I.Lodhi tried to create strong centralised empire which alarmed Afghan chiefs as well as Rajaputs.
- So in 1526 he defeated the Sultan of Delhi, Ibrahim Lodi and his Afghan supporters, at (First) Panipat (War) and captured Delhi and Agra.
- The establishment of an empire in the Indo-Gangetic valley by Babur was a threat to Rana Sanga.
- So in 1527 – defeated Rana Sanga, Rajput rulers and allies at Khanwa [a place west of Agra].
- Babur's advent was significant :
- Kabul and Qandhar became integral part of an empire comprising North India . Since these areas had always acted as staging place for an invasion of India and provide security from external invasions
- These two areas mentioned above helped to strengthen India's foreign trade with China and Mediterranean seaports .
- His war tactics were very expensive since he used heavy artillery which ended era of small kingdoms because these smaller ones cant afford it .
- He introduced a concept of state which has to be based on strength and prestige of Crown instead of religious interference. This provided a precedent and direction to his successors .

Humayun [1530-1540, 1555-1556]

- Humayun divided his inheritance according to the will of his father. His brothers were each given a province.
- Sher Khan defeated Humayun which made him forced to flee to Iran.
- In Iran Humayun received help from the Safavid Shah. He recaptured Delhi in 1555 but died in an accident the following year.

Also read: Later Mural Traditions (Indian Culture Series - NCERT)

Akbar [1556-1605]



- His reign can be divided into three periods :
1. 1556-1570 : Military campaigns were launched against the Suris and other Afghans, against the neighbouring kingdoms of Malwa and Gondwana, and to suppress the revolt of Mirza Hakim and the Uzbegs. In 1568 the Sisodiya capital of Chittor was seized and in 1569 Ranthambhor.
 2. 1570-1585 : military campaigns in Gujarat were followed by campaigns in the east in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa.
 3. 1585-1605 : expansion of Akbar's empire. Qandahar was seized from the Safavids, Kashmir was annexed, as also Kabul . Campaigns in the Deccan started and Berar, Khandesh and parts of Ahmadnagar were annexed.

Jahangir [1605-1627]

- Military campaigns started by Akbar continued.
- The Sisodiya ruler of Mewar, Amar Singh, accepted Mughal service. Less successful campaigns against the Sikhs, the Ahoms and Ahmadnagar followed.

Shah Jahan [1627-1658]

- Mughal campaigns continued in the Deccan under Shah Jahan.
- The Afghan noble Khan Jahan Lodi rebelled and was defeated.
- In the north-west, the campaign to seize Balkh from the Uzbeks was unsuccessful and Qandahar was lost to the Safavids.
- Shah Jahan was imprisoned by his son Aurangzeb for the rest of his life in Agra.

Aurangzeb [1658-1707]

- In the north-east, the Ahoms [a kingdom in Assam near Brahmaputra valley] were defeated in 1663, but they rebelled again in the 1680s. Because Ahoms successfully resisted Mughal expansion for long time and they don't want to give up their sovereignty which they were enjoying for 600 years .
- Campaigns in the north-west against the Yusufzai and the Sikhs were temporarily successful.
- Mughal intervention in the succession and internal politics of the Rathor Rajputs of Marwar led to their rebellion.
- Campaigns against the Maratha chieftain Shivaji were initially successful. However, escaped from Aurangzeb's prison Shivaji declared himself an independent king and resumed his campaigns against the Mughals.
- Prince Akbar[II] rebelled against Aurangzeb and received support from the Marathas and Deccan Sultanate.
- After Akbar's rebellion Aurangzeb sent armies against the Deccan Sultanates. Bijapur[Karnataka] was annexed in 1685 and Golconda [Telangana] in 1687.
- From 1698 Aurangzeb personally managed campaigns in the Deccan against the Marathas who started guerrilla warfare.
- Aurangzeb also had to face the rebellion in north India of the Sikhs, Jats and Satnamis . The Satnamis were sect of Hinduism and they were resented against Aurangzeb's strict Islamic policies – which included reviving the hated Islamic Jiziya tax (poll tax on non-Muslim subjects), banning music and art, and destroying Hindu temples .

Also read: Medieval India: Rulers and Buildings (NCERT)

Mughal relations with other rulers

- The Mughal rulers campaigned constantly against rulers who refused to accept their authority.

However, as the Mughals became powerful many other rulers also joined them voluntarily. eg : Rajaputs.

- The careful balance between defeating but not humiliating their opponents [but not with Shivaji by Aurangzeb] enabled the Mughals to extend their influence over many kings and chieftains.

Mansabdars and Jagirdars

- As the empire expanded to encompass different regions the Mughals recruited diverse bodies of people like Iranians, Indian Muslims, Afghans, Rajputs, Marathas and other groups.
- Those who joined Mughal service were enrolled as mansabdars – an individual who holds a mansab, meaning a position or rank.
- It was a grading system used by the Mughals to fix rank, salary and military responsibilities.
- The mansabdar's military responsibilities required him to maintain a specified number of sawar or cavalrymen.
- Mansabdars received their salaries as revenue assignments – jagirs which were somewhat like iqtas. But unlike muqtis, mansabdars did not administer jagirs, instead only had rights to collect the revenue that too by their servants while mansabdars themselves served in some other part of the country.
- In Akbar's reign these jagirs were carefully assessed so that their revenues were roughly equal to the salary of the mansabdar.
- But by Aurangzeb's reign, there was a huge increase in the number of mansabdars which meant a long wait before they received a jagir.
- So shortage of jagirdars was witnessed and whoever got jagirs they extracted more revenue than allowed .
- Aurangzeb couldn't control this development and the peasantry therefore suffered tremendously.

Zabt and Zamindars

- To sustain Mughal administration , rulers relied on extracting taxes from rural produce[peasantry].
- Mughal used one term – zamindars – to describe all intermediaries, whether they were local headmen of villages or powerful chieftains who collect these taxes for rulers.
- Careful survey was done to evaluate crop yields .
- On the basis of this data , tax was fixed.
- Each province was divided into revenue circles with its own schedule of revenue rates for individual crops. This revenue system was known as zabt.
- However, rebellious zamindars were present . They challenged the stability of the Mughal Empire from the end of the 17th century through peasant revolt.

Also read: Indian Bronze Sculpture (Indian Culture Series – NCERT)

Akbar Nama & Ain-i Akbari

- Abul Fazl wrote a three volume history of Akbar's reign titled, Akbar Nama .
- The first volume dealt with Akbar's ancestors .
- The second recorded the events of Akbar's reign.
- The third is the Ain-i Akbari. It deals with Akbar's administration, household, army, the revenues and geography of his empire. It provides rich details about the traditions and culture of the people living in India. It also got statistical details about crops, yields, prices, wages and revenues.

Akbar's policies

- The empire was divided into provinces called subas, governed by a *subadar* who carried out both political and military functions.
- Subadar was supported by other officers such as the military paymaster (bakhshi), the minister in charge of religious and charitable patronage (sadr), military commanders (faujdar) and the town police commander (kotwal). Each province
- had a financial officer or *diwan*.
- Akbar's nobles commanded large armies and had access to large amounts of revenue.
- Akbar's discussions on religion with the ulama, Brahmanas, Jesuit priests who were Roman Catholics, and Zoroastrians took place in the ibadat khana.
- He realised that religious scholars who emphasised ritual and dogma were often bigots. Their teachings created divisions and disharmony amongst his subjects. This eventually led Akbar to the idea of sulh-i kul or "universal peace".
- Abul Fazl helped Akbar in framing a vision of governance around this idea of sulh-i kul.
- This principle of governance was followed by Jahangir and Shah Jahan as well.

17th century and after

- Despite economical and commercial prosperity inequalities were a glaring fact. Poverty existed side by side with the greatest opulence.
- At the time of Shahjahan's reign highest ranking mansabdars were nominal and they are the ones who receive maximum salaries than others .
- The scale of revenue collection[tax] left very little for investment [in tools and supplies] in the hands of the primary producers – the peasant and the artisan. As
- the authority of the Mughal emperor slowly declined, his servants emerged as powerful centres of power in the regions. They constituted new dynasties and held command of provinces like Hyderabad and Awadh but still were loyal to Mughals.
- By the 18th century the provinces of the empire had consolidated their independent political identities.