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HISTORY

Chapter 10: Eighteenth - Century Political Formations



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Eighteenth - Century Political Formations

Reasons for the Decline of the Mughal Empire

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire began to decline. Many reasons have been attributed to this decline as follows:

- Aurangzeb had fought long wars in the Deccan. These wars drained off the military and financial resources of the Empire.
- The successors of Aurangzeb were weak and inefficient. They were not able to put a check on the growing powers of the nobles and the mansabdars.
- Many nobles in the Mughal Empire held the position of governors in many provinces. Since they wielded political, economical and military power, it became difficult for the successive Mughal kings to put a check on their authority.
- As the governors controlled the revenues of their provinces, the revenues of the Mughal Empire consequently declined.
- Many peasants and zamindars revolted against the Mughal authority. Many a times, these revolts took place due to high taxation.
- Many local chieftains became powerful. Due to weak kings who came into power after Aurangzeb, the local chieftans gradually began to control the economic resources of the region. The later Mughals were not able to arrest the shifting of political and economic authority from the centre to various regions.
- Invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739 weakened the empire. He sacked and plundered the city of Delhi. Later the raids of Ahmad Shah Abdali who invaded North India five times between 1748 and 1761 further deteriorated the already weakened Mughal rule.
- There was a competition between different groups of nobles to gain political power. The two major groups of nobles were the Iranis and the Turanis. Many of the later Mughals were only puppets in the hands of these groups of nobles. The assassination of Farrukhsiyar and Alamgir II by the groups of nobles badly deteriorated the condition of the Mughal Empire.



Mughal Emperor Farrukh Siyar

The Emergence of New States

After the disintegration of the Mughal Empire, many new states emerged. These new states can be broadly categorised into the following three groups:

- Old Mughal states such as Awadh, Hyderabad and Bengal: Though the rulers of these states were independent, they did not break their ties with the Mughal rule.
- The states which had enjoyed a greater independence under the Mughal rule as watan jagirs. These included many Rajput states.
- The third group included states under the control of the warrior races such as the Marathas, the Sikhs and the Jats.

All three groups were able to gain freedom after a long drawn battle with the Mughal Empire.

The Old Mughal States

Hyderabad

- The founder of the state of Hyderabad, Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah was an influential

member in the court of the Mughal Emperor Farrukh Siyar.



Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jha

- He was the Mughal governor of the Deccan provinces. During 1720-22, Asaf Jah gained political and economic control over Deccan due to the weak rule of the Mughals.
- Asaf Jah in his court brought many skilled soldiers and administrators from North India. He followed the Mughal policy of mansabdari system and gave jagirs to the appointed mansabdars.
- The State of Hyderabad was constantly engaged in conflicts against the Marathas in the west and independent Telugu warriors' chiefs known as nayaks in the south.
- The power of the Nizam was checked in the east by the British as the former wanted to gain control of the textile producing areas in the Coromandel Coast.

Awadh

- The state of Awadh was founded by Burhan-ul-mulk Saadat Khan, who was earlier appointed as its subedar by the Mughal rulers.



Burhan-ul-mulk Saadat Khan

- Awadh was a prosperous region under the Mughal rule as it had control of the rich alluvial plains of the Ganga valley and the main trade route between North India and Bengal passed through it.
- Burhan ul mulk held the offices of subedari (political), diwani (financial) and faujdari (military). This strengthened his position in the Awadh province.
- He reduced the number of office holders or jagirdars appointed by the Mughals in order to further strengthen his control over the state of Awadh. In their place, he appointed his own loyal officers as jagirdars.
- He also took control of various Rajput zamindaris and fertile lands of the Afghans of Rohilkhand.
- In Awadh, the right to collect taxes was sold to the highest bidders known as ijaradars. These ijaradars agreed to pay a fixed sum of money to the state.
- The influence of the bankers and the money lenders increased in the state as the state depended on them for loans. Bankers guaranteed to the state the payment of the contracted amount which was to be collected by the ijaradars as revenue from the land.
- In turn, the ijaradars were given a free hand in the assessment and collection of the land revenues.
- All these developments created a new class of merchants and bankers who influenced

the state revenue system.

Bengal

- Nawab Murshid Quli Khan seized control of Bengal from the Mughals. Earlier, he was appointed as a deputy to the governor of Bengal.



Nawab Murshid Quli Khan

- Murshid Quli Khan was in charge of the revenue administration of Bengal. In an attempt to decrease the Mughal influence, he transferred all the Mughal jagirdars to Orissa.
- He reassessed all the revenue producing lands of Bengal and collected revenue in cash from the zamindars with all strictness.
- This forced the zamindars to borrow money from the moneylenders and bankers. Those who were not able to pay the revenues had to sell off their lands.
- Gradually, the importance of merchants and bankers rose in the state. Their position was further strengthened during the rule of Alivardi Khan when the banking house of Jagat Seth became very prosperous.

We find the emergence of the following three common features among the above independent states:

- The Mughal nobles who carved out the independent states did not fully believe in the jagirdari system. This is because they realised that the powerful jagirdar can overthrow the weak rulers of the state.
- The rulers of these states did not rely on the officers of the state for the collection of

the revenues. They instead sold the rights of revenue collection to the highest bidders. This ruined the condition of the Indian peasantry.

- The class of powerful bankers and merchants emerged in these states as they lent money to the revenue farmers and collected revenues from the lands through their own agents. They were influencing the policies of the new political system.

The Rajputs

- Many Rajput kings were the mansabdars under the Mughal rule. The rulers of Amber and Jodhpur had served under the Mughal rule and had extended their military help to the empire whenever required.
- Therefore, these Rajput rulers had considerable freedom in governing their watan jagir. With the disintegration of the Mughal Empire, these rulers now began to extend their control over areas which were lying next to their watan jagir.
- Ajit Singh (ruler of Jodhpur) was one of the rulers trying to expand his area of influence.
- The influential Rajput families tried to claim the subedari over the rich provinces of Gujarat and Malwa. Raja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur and Raja Jai Singh of Amber tried to gain control of the neighbouring territories of their watan.
- Thus, Naguar was annexed to Jodhpur. Amber captured large parts of Bundi.
- Sawai Raja Jai Chandra rose to prominence as he founded his new capital at Jaipur. He was also given the subedari of Agra.
- However, the emergence of the Marathas as a powerful force put a check on their further expansion.



Siwai Raja Jai Singh II

The Emergence of the Warrior Races

The Marathas

- Marathas emerged as a powerful force under Shivaji (1627-1680) who were continuously raiding the Mughal territories.



The Marathas became a powerful force under Shivaji

- The Marathas were able to set up an independent kingdom in Western India with the support of the deshmuks, a powerful clan of warrior families.
- After the death of Shivaji, the power passed in the hands of the Peshwas. Poona was the capital of the Maratha Kingdom.
- Under the rule of the Peshwas, Marathas became a powerful force in the country. They raided several Mughal territories and engaged the Mughal armies in those areas where

their food supply could easily be disturbed.

- The Maratha Empire greatly expanded between 1720 and 1761. The Mughal states of Malwa and Gujarat were captured by them. By the 1730s, the Maratha king became the sole authority in the Deccan peninsula.
- The Marathas levied the chauth and sardesmukhi- one fourth and one tenth of the produce respectively in the region dominated by them.
- Gradually, the Marathas expanded their influence in Rajasthan, Punjab, Bengal, Orissa, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Though these territories were not directly annexed, they had to pay tribute to the Marathas.
- This made other rulers, their enemies and they refused to support them in the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761.
- After the Marathas conquered the areas, they increased the land under cultivation and gradually increased the revenues. This led to better economic returns. Apart from cultivation, various trading activities were encouraged by the Marathas.
- Some Maratha chiefs such as the Sindhia of Gwalior, Gaekwad of Baroda and Bhonsle of Nagpur raised powerful armies. Cities of Ujjain and Indore prospered under the rule of the Sindhias and Holkars respectively. These cities emerged as commercial and cultural centres.
- The silk trade in Chanderi expanded to Poona. Trade in Burhanpur now also spread to Poona and Nagpur.

The Sikhs

- The emergence of the Sikhs in Punjab led to the building up of the regional culture in the state. Guru Gobind Singh fought many battles against the Rajputs and the Mughals.
- He had instituted the khalsa in 1699, which revolted against the Mughal authority after the death of Guru Gobind Singh.
- Banda Bahadur emerged as an important ruler who declared Sikhs' independent and struck coins in the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.

- He established his kingdom between the rivers Sutluj and Jamuna. However, Banda Bahadur was captured and executed in 1715 by the Mughals.



Banda Bahadur

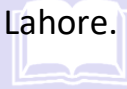
- Under many able leaders, the Sikhs organised themselves into a number of warrior bands called jathas and later into misls. Their combined forces were known as the grand army or the dal khalsa.
- They introduced the system of rakhi where they gave protection to the cultivators on paying 20% of their produce.
- The well organised army of the Sikhs successfully resisted the Mughal army many times. They also resisted Ahmad Shah Abdali who had captured Punjab and Sirhind from the Mughals.
- In 1765, the Khalsa again declared their sovereignty and struck gold coins similar to one that were issued by Banda Bahadur.
- In the late eighteenth century, Maharaja Ranjit Singh unified the Sikh military groups and established a powerful Sikh empire with its capital at Lahore.

The Jats

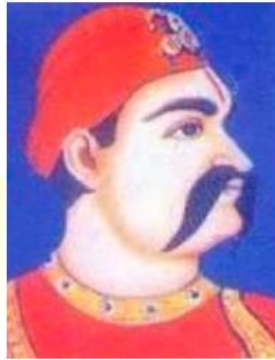
- The Jats strengthened their power during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They gained control over the city of Delhi in the 1680s under the able leadership of Churaman.



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The Jats gained control of Delhi under the able leadership of Churaman

- They also gained control of Agra and for some time became the sovereign rulers of Delhi and Agra.
- Since Jats were rich peasants and the towns of Panipat and Ballabgarh under them became important trading centers.
- Under the strong leadership of Suraj Mal, the kingdom of Bharatpur became a strong state. Many nobles living in Delhi took shelter in Bharatpur after the plunder of the imperial city by Nadir Shah in 1739.
- Jawahir Shah, son of Suraj Singh had a strong army. He along with his 30,000 soldiers had hired 20,000 Maratha and 15,000 Sikh soldiers.
- The Jats built the Bharatpur fort in a traditional style. They built beautiful palace gardens at Dig similar to the gardens at Agra and Amber.
- Their buildings had the architectural style similar to the buildings built by Shah Jahan.

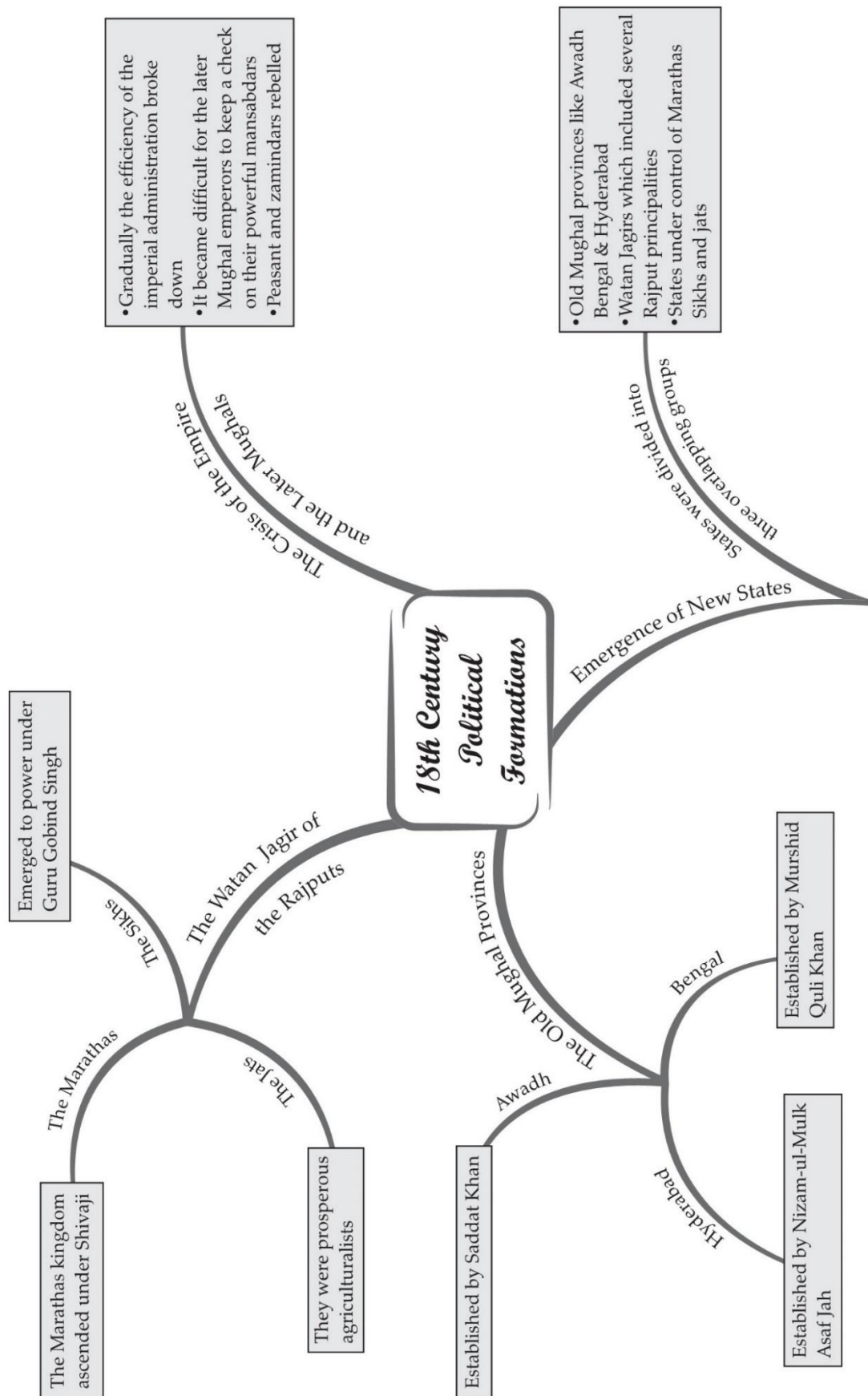
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CHAPTER-20

MIND MAP : LEARNING MADE SIMPLE



Important Questions

➤ Multiple Choice Questions :

Question 1. Who was the founder of the Maratha Kingdom?

- (a) Maharana Pratap
- (b) Shivaji
- (c) Raja Ajit Singh

Question 2. Kunbis were the:

- (a) Maratha peasant warriors
- (b) Maratha warriors
- (c) Maratha farmers

Question 3. Khalsa was instituted in the year:

- (a) 1700
- (b) 1699
- (c) 1689

Question 4. Sawai Raja Jai Singh found his new capital in:

- (a) Jaipur
- (b) Jodhpur
- (c) Bikaner

Question 5. Which part of India associated with peasant and zamindari rebellions?

- (a) Southern and eastern parts of India.
- (b) Northern and southern parts of India.
- (c) Northern and western parts of India.

Question 6. Bahadur Shah was the son of:

- (a) Shah Jahan
- (b) Akbar
- (c) Aurangzeb

Question 7. Chauth was a tax:

- (a) imposed by Maratha

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(b) imposed by Mughals

(c) imposed by Peshwa

Question 8. Surajmal was a leader of:

(a) Maratha

(b) Jats

(c) Rajput

Question 9. Murshid Quli Khan was Governor of:

(a) Bengal

(b) Awadh

(c) Hyderabad

Question 10. Khalsa was found by:

(a) Guru Gobind Singh

(b) Guru Nanak

(c) Guru Arjun Dev

Question 11. What were the small political groups of the Sikhs called?

(a) Khalsa

(b) Misls

(c) Dalkhalsa

(d) None of these

Question 12. Who were the ijaradars?

(a) Revenue farmers

(b) Farmers

(c) Tax collectors

(d) All of these

Question 13. What was the Jats were prosperous about?

(a) Artists

(b) Agriculturist

(c) Craftsman

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(d) None of these

Question 14. Who got the title of Asaf Jah founder of state of Hyderabad?

(a) Burhan-ul-Mulk

(b) Nizam-ul-Mulk

(c) Both (a) and (b)

(d) None of these

Question 15. Nadir Shah was the ruler of which country?

(a) Iran

(b) Afghan

(c) Iraq

(d) None of these

➤ **Fill in the blanks :**

1. Aurangzeb fought a protracted war in the _____.
2. In the eighteenth century, the Sikhs organized themselves into a number of bands called _____.
3. Umara and jagirdars constituted powerful sections of the Mughal _____.
4. Asaf Jah was given charge of the Deccan subadari in _____.
5. Sawai Raja Jai Singh founded his new capital at _____.

➤ **Write true (T) or false (F) :**

1. Nadir Shah invaded Bengal.
2. Murshid Quli Khan was appointed as the naib, deputy to the governor of the Bengal province.
3. Sawai Raja Jai Singh was the ruler of Indore.
4. Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth Guru of the Sikhs.
5. Poona became the capital of the Marathas in the eighteenth century.

➤ **Very Short Questions :**

1. Where was Bharatpur fort built?
2. Who was Jawahir Shah?

3. When was khalsa established?
4. When was Banda Bahadur captured and executed?
5. When was the third battle of Panipat fought?
6. When did Marathas successfully raid Delhi?
7. Where did Sawai Raja Jai Singh found his new capital?
8. Name the ruler under whose leadership the Jats became powerful.
9. Name two important trading centres in the areas dominated by Jats.
10. What was the result of Aurangzeb's long war in the Deccan?

➤ Short Questions :

1. Who ruled the Maratha kingdom after the death of Shivaji?
2. Why zamindars of Bengal had to borrow money from bankers and moneylenders?
3. Write a short note on administration of Marathas.
4. Why did the Marathas want to expand beyond the Deccan?
5. Who established a stable Maratha kingdom and how?

➤ Long Questions :

1. What were the different overlapping group of states that emerged in the 18th Century after the decline of the Mughal Empire?

OR

Divide the states of the eighteenth century into three overlapping groups.

2. Write a short note on expansion of Maratha Empire between 1720 and 1761.

OR

Give an account of the Maratha expansion occurred between 1720 and 1761.

3. Discuss the factors that led to the decline of Mughal Empire.

OR

The Mughal Empire had to face a variety of crises towards the closing years of the 17th century. What were the causes behind it?

4. Describe the three common features of the states like Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad.

OR

State the three common features between the states Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad.

OR

What are the common features of the three regional states of Bengal, Awadh and Hyderabad?

5. How were the Sikhs organised in the eighteenth century?

ANSWER KEY –

➤ Multiple Choice Answer :

1. (b) Shivaji
2. (a) Maratha peasant warriors
3. (b) 1699
4. (a) Jaipur
5. (b) Northern and southern parts of India.
6. (c) Aurangzeb
7. (a) imposed by Maratha
8. (b) Jats
9. (a) Bengal
10. (a) Guru Gobind Singh
11. (b) Misls
12. (a) Revenue farmers
13. (b) Agriculturist
14. (b) Nizam-ul-Mulk
15. (a) Iran

➤ Fill in the blanks :

1. Deccan
2. Jathas
3. Administration
4. 1724
5. Jaipur

➤ **Write true (T) or false (F) :**

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. True

➤ **Very Short Answer :**

1. Bharatpur fort was built at Dig.
2. Jawahir Shah was son of Nadir Shah.
3. The Khalsa tradition was initiated in 1699.
4. Banda Bahadur was captured in 1715 and executed in 1716.
5. The third battle of Panipat took place in 1761.
6. 1737 AD
7. Sawai Raja Jai Singh founded his new capital at Jaipur.
8. Churaman.
9. Panipat and Ballabgarh became important trading centres in the areas dominated by Jats.
10. Emperor Aurangzeb had depleted the military and financial resources of his empire by fighting a long war in the Deccan.

➤ **Short Answer :**

1. 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.
2. Revenue was collected in cash with great strictness from all zamindars. As a result, many zamindars had to borrow money from bankers and moneylenders.
3. The Marathas developed an effective administrative system as well. They introduced revenue demands gradually taking local conditions into account. Agriculture was encouraged and trade revived. This allowed Maratha chiefs (sardars) to raise powerful armies.
4. Marathas wanted to expand beyond the Deccan for power and authority. It gradually

chipped away at the authority of the Mughal Empire. By the 1720s, they seized Malwa and Gujarat from the Mughals and by the 1730s, the Maratha king was recognised as the overlord of the entire Deccan peninsula. He possessed the right to levy chauth and sardeshmukhi in the entire region.

5. The Maratha kingdom was another powerful regional kingdom to arise out of a sustained opposition to Mughal rule. Shivaji (1627-1680) carved out a stable kingdom with the support of powerful warrior families (deshmukhs). Groups of highly mobile, peasantpastoralists (kunjis) provided the backbone of the Maratha army. Shivaji used these forces to challenge the Mughals in the peninsula.

➤ Long Answer :

1. **Broadly speaking the states of the eighteenth century can be divided into three overlapping groups:**
 - i. States that were old Mughal provinces like Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad. Although extremely powerful and quite independent, the rulers of these states did not break their formalities with the Mughal emperor.
 - ii. States that had enjoyed considerable independence under the Mughals as watan jagirs. These included several Rajput principalities.
 - iii. The last group included states under the control of Marathas, Sikhs and others like the Jats. These were of differing sizes and had seized their independence from the Mughals after a long-drawn armed struggle.
2. Between 1720 and 1761, the Maratha empire expanded. It gradually chipped away at the authority of the Mughal Empire. Malwa and Gujarat were seized from the Mughals by the 1720s. By the 1730s, the Maratha king was recognised as the overlord of the entire Deccan peninsula. After raiding Delhi in 1737 the frontiers of Maratha domination expanded rapidly: into Rajasthan and the Punjab in the north; into Bengal and Orissa in the east; and into Karnataka and the Tamil and Telugu countries in the south. These were not formally included in the Maratha empire, but were made to pay tribute as a way of accepting Maratha sovereignty.
3. Mughal Empire faced crisis caused by a number of factors towards the end of the seventeenth century.
 - i. Aurangzeb depleted military and financial resources of his empire by fighting a long war in the Deccan.
 - ii. It became increasingly difficult for later Mughal Emperors to keep a check on powerful mansabdars.

- iii. The Governors established independent kingdoms in different areas.
- iv. Mounting taxes led to Peasants and zamindari rebellions.
- v. Nadir Shah sacked and plundered the city of Delhi in 1739 and took away immense amounts of wealth.
- vi. This invasion was followed by series of plundering raids by the Afghan ruler, Ahmad Shah Abdali, who invaded north India five times between 1748 and 1761. The empire was further weakened by the competition amongst different groups of nobles.

4. **Three common features amongst these states were:**

Firs: though many of the larger states were established by erstwhile Mughal nobles they were highly suspicious of some of the administrative systems that they had inherited, in particular the jagirdari system.

Second: their method of tax collection differed. Rather than relying upon the officers of the state, all three regimes contracted with revenue-farmers for the collection of revenue. The practice of ijaradari, thoroughly disapproved of by the Mughals, spread all over India in the eighteenth century. Their impact on the countryside differed considerably.

The third: common feature in all these regional states was their emerging relationship with rich bankers and merchants. These people lent money to revenue farmers, received land as security and collected taxes from these lands through their own agents. Throughout India the richest merchants and bankers were gaining a stake in the new political order.

5. Under a number of able leaders in the eighteenth century, the Sikhs organized themselves into a number of bands called jathas, and later on misls. Their combined forces were known as the grand army (dal khalsa). The entire body used to meet at Amritsar at the time of Baisakhi and Diwali to take collective decisions known as “resolutions of the Guru (gurmata)”. A system called rakhi was introduced, offering protection to cultivators on the payment of a tax of 20 per cent of the produce.