



## AN EMPIRE'S FALL: CAUSE AND EFFECT WITH REFERENCE TO MUGHAL EMPIRE

**Dr. Venkatrao Palati**

**Associate Professor and Chairman,  
Department of Studies and Research in History,  
Davanagere University, Davanagere.**

### ABSTRACT

*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.*



**KEYWORDS:** *electronics and telecommunications.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

The Decline of the Mughal Empire, edited by Meena Bhargava provides a series of coherent answers to this question through a collage of ideas brought forth by many eminent historians as part of its Debates in Indian History and Society series. While there were divergent views and debates among historians about the withering of the “mammoth imperial banyan tree”, this collection attempts to focus on different paradigms or assumptions that have shaped interpretations on the decline of Mughal Empire.

### 2. THE CAUSES OF THE DECLINE OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE:

According to the authors, the causes of the decline of the Mughal Empire can be grouped under the following heads:

- a) deterioration of land relations;
- b) emergence of regional powers as successor states;
- c) selfish struggle of nobles at the court;
- d) lack of initiative in modern weapons;
- e) lack of control over the bankers of the state and above all
- f) Aurangzeb's Deccan campaign.

Unlike Emperor Akbar who preferred paying his officials' salaries directly from the state treasury, his successors Shahjahan and Aurangzeb opted for jagirs (temporary allotment of lands to officials for their services – which may be according to the satisfaction of the Emperor) and Paibaqi (revenue from reserved

lands which was sent to the central treasury). While the jagirdars tried to extract as much from the land by oppressing the peasants within a short period, the zamindars (who were given powers to manage the lands belongs to the state by managing the peasants and delivering the state's prescribed share to the treasury) became a subordinate class within the ruling elite of the Mughal Empire. There was a constant clash of interest between the nobles at the Emperor's court and zamindars. Consequently the main danger to law and order came from zamindars who refused to pay the revenue and had to be cowed down or destroyed by force.

The politics that emerged upon the collapse of the Mughal Empire was two kinds. In one class the 'succession states' like Hyderabad, Bengal and Awadh, which were really fragments of the Empire, had to stand on their own as the central government decayed and became powerless to assist or assert. In the second category were the Maratha confederacy, the Jats, the Sikhs and the Afghans. Their origins as polities were independent of Mughal Empire.

Mysore under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan stood outside these two categories, and was in some ways most remarkable. It made a conscious attempt to implant Mughal administrative institutions in an area that had only been nominally a part of Mughal Empire. At the same time, it was the first state in India to make a beginning towards modernization, first and foremost in the realm of the military and in the manufacture of weapons, but also in commerce, where the English East India Company's practices were sought to be imitated.

The nobles found that their careers were not linked to talent and that loyal and useful service was 'no security against capricious dismissal and degradation'. Their (selfish) struggle necessarily ranged them in factions, each group or bloc trying to push the fortunes of its members and hinder the success of its rivals. However, only some of them could establish their dominance. In order to sustain their power in court, these nobles had surreptitious relations with regional governors, zamindars and other chieftains. It is the case of Mushid-Quli of Bengal who through his clout among the nobles at the court, effected reforms in revenue which ultimately led to the formation of a new, regional ruling group.

The period of imperial decline coincided with the increasing involvement of banking firms in revenue collections at regional and local levels. It brought bankers, more directly than before, into positions of political power all over India. In contrast to their earlier policies, the bankers extended trade and credit transactions to newcomers, the Dutch and the English. Ironically, the Jagat Seths (Imperial Treasurers) who helped the East India Company to overthrow Nawab Sirajuddaula, were cut to size by the same Robert Clive who stopped the allowance of Seths as ministers of the Nawab in 1770. Ultimately, they ceased to be Company Bankers by 1772.

In a sense, the Deccan Campaign became Aurangzeb's Waterloo. In his eagerness for further expansion, Aurangzeb exposed to incessant raiding districts in the Deccan that were formerly secure from outside attack. Unlike Emperor Akbar, who assimilated Rajputs within his kingdom, Aurangzeb was unable to effectively assimilate the Maratha, Bedar, Gond or Telugu warrior chiefs formerly living in areas beyond the reach of direct administration by a Muslim state as imperial elites. Failure to sustain imperial officers in the province resulted in intensified disorder and defiance of imperial authority. Even though they were stationed in the Deccan, the Mughals failed to defeat the Marathas. It was these protracted wars that produced the signs of decline, namely an imbalance between the number of jagirdars and the jagirs available, peasant revolts and disloyal nobility. Together with the emergence of regional dynastic rulers who pioneered processes of growth and regeneration, the Mughal Empire did not fall -- it was simply swallowed by a larger political organism. The Company was waiting on the wings to gobble them up whole soon.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS:

For students of history, this attempt is really an opportunity to understand the inherent contradictions that prevailed under the Mughal Empire, which ultimately led to the emergence of British colonial rule in India.