

Pakistan Studies

GCSE/IGCSE

The Decline of the Mughal Empire

Part B:

1. In what ways was the Mughal Empire successful?

Ans. The Mughal empire was successful in several ways. For almost two hundred and fifty years, they kept the whole subcontinent consolidated and unified under one rule. Muslim values were upheld despite the fact that the majority was Hindu, who lived under Mughal rule as their subjects. However, they allowed for the existence of religious plurality, as Hindus still held onto their beliefs and Hinduism was still the religion of the majority. Speaking about their governmental abilities, their administration and affairs ensured peace and stability in such a multi-cultural and multi-religious land. At the peak of Mughal rule, India was considered to be much more advanced than Europe in many ways. Furthermore, they added magnificently to literature, art and architecture, building mosques e.g. Badshahi mosque, forts e.g. the Red Fort, Taj Mahal, Hiran Minar, etc. They also contributed to calligraphy, design, music and painting. They were symbol of fine administration and remarkable artistic taste, before their decline in the eighteenth century.

2. What are the causes of the decline of the Mughal Empire?

Ans. The Mughal empire gradually collapsed due to several reasons. The three major reasons are the rise of problems in Delhi, rebellions and invasions. Delhi, the capital of the Mughal Empire, suffered poor leadership, corruption amongst government officials, and lack of military strength, which weakened it. As the capital got weaker, the stronghold that the Mughals had once developed also weakened, resulting in rebellions from within the subcontinent, including the Marathas, mughal provincial governors declaring independence, local leaders challenging Mughal power, and previously loyal princes challenging Mughal authorities. From the outside, invasions begun from Persia and Afghanistan, and the Europeans also started firmly rooting here. All these factors collectively contributed to the decline and eventual fall of the Mughal Empire.

3. How did invasions weaken the Mughal Empire?

Ans. Invasions weakened the Mughal Empire as they were from two very strong contenders, Persia and Afghanistan, who repeatedly kept sending their armies. Nadir Shah from Persia first started launching attacks, seeking to capture some of the empire's wealth. After them, the Afghan leader Ahmad Shah launched ten invasions on the north of India. This recurrent attack progressively weakened the already weak Mughal army, and also included in the defeat of the Marathas. He wanted to exploit the rich Mughal resources, after which he left.

4. Why were the Europeans interested in India?

Ans. The Europeans were interested in India for the richness of its economy and the abundance of its resources. They sought trade opportunities here in several market areas including spices, cotton, cloth and even opium. Moreover, they were also interested in the gold and silver reserves here, as well as the jewelry produced by Indian metal-workers, which was highly valued. The opening of direct sea routes in the fifteenth century, particularly the Cape of Good Hope, made the trade process easier. This resulted in the Dutch, Portugese and French opening trade-posts here.