

CC-12:HISTORY OF INDIA(C.1750s-1857)

INDIA IN THE MID 18TH CENTURY:SOCIETY,ECONOMY, POLITY

The 18th century ushered in Indian history with a promise to change the political scenario of India which would also lead to changes in the socio- economic life of the people of the country. This century witnessed the long process of disintegration and finally the decline of the Mughal Empire which ruled India for about two hundred years.

The process began with the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 CE. After the death of Aurangzeb the later Mughals failed to keep the empire consolidated .The empire was gradually disintegrating at the hands of the inefficient rulers. The only dim chance of reviving the empire was seen during the reign of Muhammad Shah(1719-1748CE).But this chance was also ruled out as the Hereditary Nawabs started carving out their semi-independent states in Bengal, Hyderabad, Awadh and Punjab. Soon the map of Mughal supremacy was dotted with rebellions.

In 1738 Nadir Shah, the ruler of Persia attracted by the wealth and richness of India descended upon the Indian plain and rendered irreparable damage to the already feeble Mughal empire.Moreover the internal disputes and weaknesses of the Mughal empire was exposed to the Maratha Sardars and also to the Officials of the English East India Company all of whom were looking for opportunities for the expansion of their own supremacy.

In between 1748-1767 India witnessed repeated invasion and plundering by Ahmad Shah Abdali who also defeated the Marathas in the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761 which proved to be quite a blow to the Maratha ambition of uprooting the remnants of the Mughal empire.

From the mid-18th Century onwards the English East India Company was getting increasingly involved in the Indian politics, economy and society. The important political milestones on the part of the Europeans that helped them to gain full control of the administrative system of India are as follows:-

- Lord Wellesley's Subsidiary Alliance
- The Policy of Doctrine of Lapse introduced by Lord Dalhousie.
- The three Carnatic wars fought between 1745 and 1763

- The Battle of Plassey (1757) which led to the conquest of Bengal.
- The Battle of Buxar(1764) which made the British the *de facto* ruler of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa(Dual Government)
- Four Anglo-Mysore wars fought between 1766 and 1799 led to the conquest of Mysore province by the signing of the subsidiary alliance
- Three Anglo-Maratha war fought between 1715-1818 and a number of Anglo-Maratha treaties signed that lead to the annexation of the Maratha confederacy.
- Two Anglo-Sikh war fought between 1845-1849.

The political scenario with the chaos and rebellion and wars of resistance and oppression of the English East India company casted quite an effect on the economic life of the county.

- Agriculture suffered due to technological backwardness. The revenue system, the oppression of the zamindars and the money lenders made the life of the farmers miserable.
- Internal trade declined
- Foreign trade was completely at the hands of the Europeans and the East India Company enjoyed trade monopoly.
- Decline of indigenous industry due to political unrest.

The social life of the mid-18th Century India was largely dominated by caste system and patriarchal pattern. Nature of education imparted was traditional and rooted in ancient thoughts. Condition of women were the worst. The system of sati, child marriage, female foeticide, evils of dowry added many fold to the plight of the women of that century.