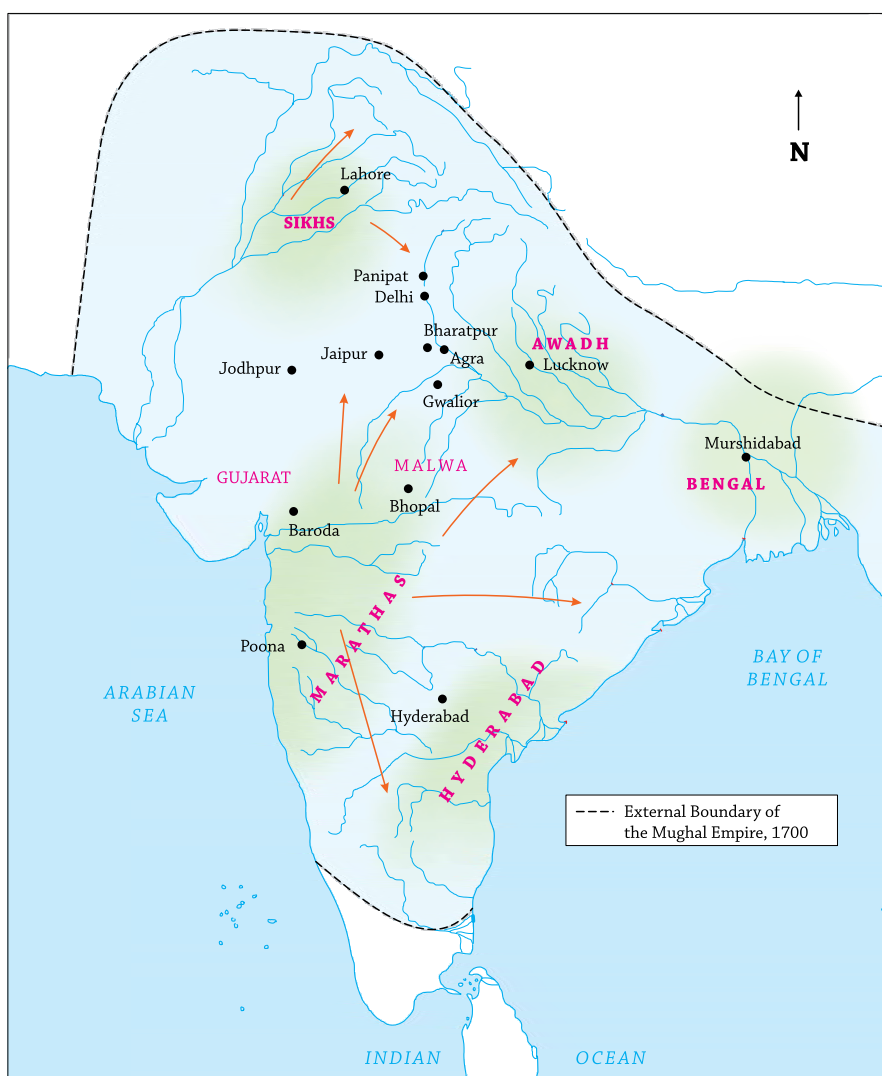




**A**fter the death of Aurangzeb (1707), the Mughal Empire began to decline. Many independent kingdoms began to emerge in the 18th century. During the first half of the eighteenth century (up to 1761), the boundaries of the Mughal empire were reshaped by the emergence of these kingdoms. By 1765 the British had conquered most of the eastern India.

### Later Mughals

The Mughal rulers who occupied the throne after Aurangzeb are called the Later Mughals. They were weak rulers under whom the nobles exercised real power. There was competition amongst different groups of nobles. They were divided into two major groups or factions on the basis of their origin — the Iranis and Turanis (Turkish). Each tried to assert its superiority over the other. For a long time, one or other of these two powerful groups directed the later Mughal emperors in their decisions like a puppet. The worst phase of the things was that the nobles assassinated two Mughal emperors, Farrukh Siyar (1713-1719) and Alamgir II (1754-1759) and blinded two others Ahmad Shah (1748 -1754) and Shah Alam II (1759 -1816).



Formation of new kingdoms in the eighteenth century



Farrukh Siyar



Nadir Shah

Emperor Aurangzeb had depleted the military and financial resources of his empire by fighting a long war in the Deccan. Because of the interference of the nobles, the efficiency of the imperial administration broke down. It became increasingly difficult for the later Mughal emperors to keep a check on their powerful *mansabdars*. At the higher level *subadars* (governors) and *mansabdars* and at the lower level *zamindars* (local chieftains) became powerful as they controlled the revenue and military at their respective levels. As they consolidated their control over their respective regions, the periodic remission of revenue to the central treasury decreased. Lack of loyalty and control made both the emperor and the nobles at court incapable to check the gradual shifting of political (military) and economic (revenue) power into the hands of the provincial governors and the local chieftains.

In 1739, during the reign of Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah, the ruler of Persia (Iran), Nadir Shah looted Delhi and massacred large number of people. After this Afghan ruler Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded and plundered north India five times between 1748 and 1761.

#### Wealth looted by Nadir Shah from the Mughal Treasury

Sixty lakhs of rupees and some thousand gold coins, nearly one crore worth of gold-ware, nearly fifty crore worth of jewels, most of them unrivalled in the world, and the above included the Peacock throne.

— as described by a contemporary observer

The value of one rupee in that period was very much higher than today.

### Emergence of New States

As the authority of the Mughal emperors weakened, their governors of large provinces and great zamindars became independent. Through the eighteenth century, the Mughal empire gradually fragmented into a number of independent regional states. These can be divided broadly into three types :

- (1) States like Hyderabad, Awadh and Bengal that were old Mughal provinces — independent but keeping formal ties with the Mughal emperor.
- (2) Watan jagirs of Rajputs like Amber and Jodhpur, considerable independent under the Mughals.
- (3) States under the control of Sikhs, Marathas, Jats, etc. — completely independent of the Mughals.

### The Old Mughal Provinces

The large regional states of Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad were founded by the members of the high Mughal nobility (occupying high *mansabdari* positions). They were appointed governors of these large provinces in trust and confidence of the emperors— Sa'adat Khan (Awadh), Murshid Quli Khan (Bengal) and Asaf Jah (Hyderabad).

## Hyderabad

Chin Qilich Khan Asaf Jah was one of the most powerful members at the court of the Mughal emperor Farrukh Siyar. He was entrusted first with the governorship of Awadh and later given charge of the Deccan in 1722 by Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah. He had been given the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk. Taking advantage of the turmoil in the Deccan and the competition amongst the court nobility in Delhi, he consolidated his rule and acted as an independent ruler under the Mughal emperor. He founded the Asaf Jahi dynasty and his successors were called the Nizam of Hyderabad. Asaf Jah ruled quite independently without seeking any direction from Delhi or facing any interference.

Asaf Jah brought skilled soldiers and administrators from northern India. He appointed *mansabdars* and granted *jagirs*. The state of Hyderabad was constantly in struggle against the Marathas to the west and with Telugu warrior chiefs of the Plateau. Nizam also tried to control the rich textile-producing area of the east coast but was checked by the British.

## Awadh

Burhan-ul-Mulk Sa'adat Khan was appointed governor of Awadh in 1722 by Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah. He was rewarded for helping the emperor overthrow the Sayyid brothers who had assumed the role of king makers. He was responsible for managing the political, military and financial affairs of the province of Awadh.

Sa'adat Khan reduced the number of *jagirdars* appointed by the Mughals and the size of *jagirs*. He appointed his own loyal servants to vacant positions. This was done to decrease Mughal influence in the Awadh region. Revenues of all districts were reassessed and accounts of *jagirdars* were checked to prevent cheating. The state also sold the right to collect tax to the highest bidders from local bankers. These were called revenue farmers or *ijaradaras* who guaranteed the payment of a fixed sum of the contracted amount to the state. In turn, they were given freedom in the assessment and collection of taxes.

## Bengal

Murshid Quli Khan (1717-1727) was appointed as the *naib*, deputy to the governor of the province by Farrukh Siyar. He quickly seized all the power and commanded the revenue administration of the state. To reduce Mughal influence in Bengal he transferred all *jagirdars* appointed by the Mughals to Orissa and ordered reassessment of the revenues. Revenue was collected in cash with great strictness from all *zamindars*. Thus, *zamindars* had to borrow money from bankers and money-lenders.

Murshid Quli Khan shifted his capital to Murshidabad. He was succeeded by Shujauddin Khan and Alivardi Khan (1740-1756).



Alivardi Khan holding court

## Common Features of the Three States

- (i) The founders (Mughal nobles) of these states were highly suspicious of the jagirdari system.
- (ii) The state contracted with revenue-farmers for the collection of revenue (This practice was thoroughly disapproved of by the Mughals).
- (iii) The emerging relationship of the states with the rich bankers and merchants. These people who lent money to revenue farmers in Awadh and Bengal received land as security and collected tax from these lands through their own agents.



Mehrangarh Fort, Jodhpur

## The Watan Jagirs of the Rajputs

Rajput kings of Amber, Jodhpur and others had served the Mughals with loyalty. Therefore, the emperors had allowed them considerable independence in ruling over their *watan jagirs*. Sawai Raja Jai Singh of Amber was governor of Malwa and Raja Ajit Singh governor of Gujarat. In 1713, Emperor Jahandar Shah renewed these offices. Sawai Raja Jai Singh was given the *subadari* of Agra in 1722. Both of them extended their territories by seizing portions of imperial territories neighbouring their *watans* (homelands). Jodhpur state conquered and annexed Nagaur and Amber state seized large portions of Bundi. Sawai Raja Jai Singh also founded his new capital Jaipur. But from the 1740s further expansion of these states was checked by Maratha campaigns into Rajasthan.



Guru Gobind Singh

## Seizing Independence by Armed Struggle

The states under control of Sikhs, Marathas and Jats were of differing sizes. They seized their independence from the Mughals after a long-drawn armed struggle.

### Sikhs

The Sikhs were not successful in establishing a separate state for themselves despite the formation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 17th century. It helped in regional-state building in Punjab in the long run though. Guru Gobind Singh fought several battles against the Rajput and Mughal rulers. After his death the Sikhs organised themselves under a capable leader Banda Bahadur. They declared their independent rule by striking coins in the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and established their own administration between Sulej and Jamuna. They tried to resist the Mughals and even overran the entire territory between Lahore and Delhi. But the Mughals defeated them decisively. Banda Bahadur was captured in 1715 and executed in 1716.

However, the political situation in Punjab became favourable for the Sikhs following the invasion of Nadir Shah from Persia (Iran) and Ahmed Shah Abdali from Afghanistan. Taking advantage of the subsequent conflict between the Afghans and the followers of Nadir Shah, the Sikhs started to organise themselves into small groups or bands called

*jathas* and later *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. A system called *rakhi* was introduced, offering protection to cultivators on the payment of a tax of 20 per cent of the produce. Their well-knit organizations occupied regions, province by province, and divided these territories among themselves. Soon, they drove out the governor of Ahmed Shah Abdali from Sirhind and Punjab. The khalsa declared their independent rule by striking their own coins again in 1765.

The Sikh territories in the late eighteenth century extended from the Indus to the Jamuna but they were divided under different rulers. The *misls* cooperated with one another but failed to unite as a single power. It was only under Maharaja Ranjit Singh (of the Sukerchakia *misl*) that they united as a Sikh kingdom. He established his capital at Lahore in 1799.



Maharaja Ranjit Singh


### The Marathas (Case Study)

Shivaji (1627-1680) carved out a stable kingdom from the Mughals with the support of powerful warrior families (*deshmukhs*). Groups of highly mobile peasant-pastoralists (*kunbis*) provided the backbone of the Maratha army. The warrior Maratha tribes lived in the Western Ghats and hilly regions of the Konkan. They had received military training in the service of the Deccan kingdoms such as Bijapur. Shivaji was the son of Shahji Bhonsle, a Jagirdar of the Bijapur state. He received training in statecraft and warfare under Dadaji Konda Dev. He grew up with the dream of creating a strong and powerful Maratha state. He organised the Maratha hill tribes into a military force. Shivaji developed a new method of warfare called **guerilla warfare** which involved surprise attacks on the enemy. He attacked the territories of Bijapur and was successful in capturing several forts. He killed the general of the Sultan of Bijapur.



Chhatrapati Shivaji

In 1663, Aurangzeb sent a force under Shaista Khan, the Mughal governor of the Deccan to suppress Marathas. The Maratha forces attacked Shaista Khan at night, wounding him and killing his son. Next, Shivaji attacked the Mughal port of Surat in 1664. Aurangzeb sent Raja Jai Singh against him. Shivaji was defeated and signed the treaty of Purandhar in 1665. He had to surrender several forts and agreed to meet Aurangzeb at Agra. There Shivaji was humiliated and imprisoned along with his son Sambhaji. However, they escaped from there concealed in baskets of sweets after some time. Shivaji resumed his struggle. In 1674, he proclaimed himself Chhatrapati (the supreme head) of the Maratha kingdom at Raigarh. He maintained a well-trained and disciplined army with a strong cavalry, artillery, infantry and navy. He built a series of well-maintained and strongly garrisoned forts for defence. He captured Jinji, Vellore and parts of Mysore before his death. Shivaji's son Sambhaji continued the struggle against the Mughals. However, he was captured and tortured to death in 1689 while his son



Shahu was imprisoned by Aurangzeb. Then Sambhaji's step brother Rajaram took the reins of the Maratha empire and fought with the Mughals. His minor son Shivaji II succeeded him who ruled under the regentship of his mother Tarabai. After Aurangzeb's death in 1707, Shahu was released. He managed to capture the throne with the help of Balaji Vishwanath who was made the Peshwa (principal minister) for his support. He belonged to a family of Chitapavan Brahmanas. Shahu left the administration in the hands of Balaji Vishwanath who held the effective power. Thus, the power passed into the hands of the Peshwas. Poona became the capital of the Maratha kingdom. After the death of Shahu in 1750, the third Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao became the virtual ruler.

Under the Peshwas the Marathas became a very successful military organisation. Their success lay in raiding the cities (rather than forts) and engaging armies in areas where their supply lines and sending of additional troops could be easily disturbed. They seized Malwa and Gujarat from the Mughals by the 1720s. Balaji Vishwanath got the right to collect taxes called *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* from six Mughal provinces in the Deccan.

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 in the north, east and south. They did not annex the territories but got tribute. Expansion brought huge resources which enabled Maratha chiefs (*sardars*) to raise powerful armies. Second Peshwa Balaji Rao (1720-1740) formed a Maratha confederacy. The Peshwa was the head. It consisted of the Gaekwads of Baroda, the Bhonsles of Nagpur, the Holkars of Indore and the Scindias of Gwalior. Their chiefs were given autonomy in the former Mughal provinces. But the Maratha military campaigns made other rulers unfriendly and the Marathas did not get enough support from them during the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761 with Ahmed Shah Abdali.

**Chauth** : literally one-fourth of the assessed revenue claimed by jagirdars paid as tribute to prevent plunder by Marathas.

**Sardeshmukhi** : one-tenth of the assessed revenue paid to the head revenue collector, demanded by the Maratha king.

Land revenue in the Maratha state was based on the assessment of the land. The state's share was fixed at two-fifths of the total produce. The system of *jagirs* was abolished. Direct settlement was made with cultivators. The cities under the Maratha rule flourished and became important commercial and cultural centres. New trade routes emerged within the areas controlled by the Marathas. For example, the silk produced in the Chanderi region now found a new outlet Poona, the Maratha capital. Burhanpur city now became connected to Lucknow and Allahabad in the east and Poona and Nagpur in the south.

## The Jats

The Jats were the peasants of the fertile land on both sides of the Yamuna. During the rule of early Mughals, the land revenue was one-third of the produce. It was gradually increased to almost half during the Aurangzeb's rule. It angered the Jats and revolt under the leadership of Gokul ensued in 1669. They were defeated but their struggle continued. The Jats consolidated their power during the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Under their leader, Churaman, they acquired control over territories situated to the west of the city of Delhi. By the 1680s they had begun dominating the region between the two imperial cities of Delhi and Agra. The special feature of this movement was that the peasants fought along side the soldiers.



*Garden palace at Dig, district Bharatpur, Rajasthan*

After death of Aurangzeb, an independent Jat kingdom was founded with its capital at Bharatpur. The most famous Jat king was Surajmal. Under Surajmal the kingdom of Bharatpur emerged as a strong state. When Nadir Shah sacked Delhi in 1739, many of the city notables took refuge there. His son Jwahir Shah had 30,000 troops of his own and hired another 20,000 Marathas and 15,000 Sikh troops to fight the Mughals.

Bharatpur Fort was built in a traditional style. An elaborate garden palace was built at Dig in the eighteenth century combining styles seen at Amber and Agra. The Jats were prosperous farmers. Towns like Panipat and Ballabgarh became important trading centres in the areas dominated by them.

### In Other Parts of the World

In any part of the world, the common people had no right to choose their government. Some philosophers in America and later in French suggested that there should be equal laws and opportunities for all. No group in society should have privileges based on birth. They also held that the authority of the government should come from the people. Movements such as the American Revolution (1776-1781) and French Revolution (1789-1794) transformed subjects into citizens. During the French Revolution, the middle classes, the peasants and artisans fought against the special right enjoyed by the churchmen and nobility.

### Key Words

- » Subadari : provincial governor.
- » Misl : a band of Sikh warriors.
- » Dal Khalsa : the combined forces of the Sikhs.
- » Ijaradari : a contract between the revenue farmers and the state to pay the state a fixed sum of money for the land revenue.
- » Chauth : one-fourth of the assessed land revenue claimed by the jagirdars, paid as the tribute to prevent plunder by Marathas.

- » Sardeshmukhi : one-tenth of the assessed revenue paid to the head revenue collector, demanded by the Maratha king.
- » Kunbis : Maratha peasant warriors.
- » Peshwa : principal minister of the Maratha king.
- » Nizam-ul-Mulk : a governor of a region or country.
- » Chhatrapati : a king or emperor of Marathas.
- » Confederacy : a union of political organisations.
- » Jagir : a land given to a noble or army chieftain revenue of which to be used as salary for him and his troops.
- » Turanis : nobles of Turkish descent.

## SUMMARY

- ▶ The Mughal rulers who occupied the throne after Aurangzeb were called the Later Mughals. They were the weak rulers under which the nobles exercised real power.
- ▶ After the death of Aurangzeb, many independent kingdoms began to emerge in the eighteenth century.
- ▶ Lack of loyalty and control made both the emperor and the nobles at court incapable to check the gradual shifting of political and economic power into the hands of the provincial governors and local chieftains.
- ▶ The large regional states of Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad were founded by the members of the high Mughal nobility. These were independent but they kept formal ties with the Mughal emperor.
- ▶ Rajput kings of Amber, Jodhpur and others had served the Mughals with loyalty. Therefore, the emperors had allowed them considerable independence in ruling over their watan jagirs.
- ▶ States under the control of Sikhs, Marathas, Jats etc. were completely independent of the Mughals. They seized their independence from the Mughals after a long-drawn armed struggle.
- ▶ The Marathas got the right to collect taxes called chauth and sardeshmukhi from six Mughal provinces in the Deccan.

## Exercise Time

### A. Tick (✓) the only correct choice amongst the following :

1. Burhan-ul-Mulk sa'adat Khan was appointed governor of Awadh in :
  - a. 1720
  - b. 1721
  - c. 1722
  - d. 1723
2. Shivaji's son Sambhaji continued the struggle against the :
  - a. Marathas
  - b. Mughals
  - c. Rajputs
  - d. British
3. The Khalsa declared their independent rule by striking their own coins again in :
  - a. 1765
  - b. 1766
  - c. 1767
  - d. 1768
4. Land revenue in the Maratha state was based on the assessment of the :
  - a. money
  - b. land
  - c. crop
  - d. all of these
5. The Jats were the peasants of the fertile land on both sides of the :
  - a. Ganga
  - b. Yamuna
  - c. Kaveri
  - d. Brahmaputra

### B. Fill in the blanks :

1. Aurangzeb fought a long war in the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The founder of the Awadh state was \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Asaf Jah was given charge of the Deccan Subadari in \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ founded the Khalsa.
5. The Maratha used the \_\_\_\_\_ style of warfare.





**C. Match the Following :**

- |             |                             |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. chauth   | a. a band of Sikh warriors  |
| 2. ijaradar | b. tribute to the Marathas  |
| 3. misl     | c. provincial governor      |
| 4. kunbis   | d. a revenue farmer         |
| 5. subadar  | e. Maratha peasant warriors |

**D. Write true (T) or False (F) against the following statements in given brackets :**

1. Sawai Raja Jai Singh was the ruler of Amber.
2. Poona became the capital of the Marathas in the eighteenth century.
3. Nadir Shah invaded Bengal.
4. Sa'adat Khan was made the governor of Awadh by Muhammad Shah.
5. Balaji Vishwanath was the third Peshwa of the Marathas.

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**E. Define the following terms :**

1. Ijaradari      2. Chauth      3. Sardeshmukhi      4. Jagir      5. Misl

**F. Answer in one word or one phrase :**

1. Which ruler of Bengal shifted his capital from Dhaka to Murshidabad ?
2. Under whom the Sikhs formed a separate state ?
3. At which place Shivaji proclaimed himself as Chhatrapati ?
4. Which city was built by Sawai Raja Jai Singh ?
5. Between whom was the Third Battle of Panipat fought ?

**G. Answer these questions briefly :**

1. What were the offices held by Sa'adat Khan ?
2. Why did the Nawabs of Awadh and Bengal try to do away with the Jagirdari system ?
3. How were the Sikhs organised in the eighteenth century ?
4. What were the policies adopted by Asaf Jah to strengthen his position ?
5. What was the role of the rich bankers and merchants in Awadh and Bengal ?

**H. Answer these questions in detail :**

1. Who were known as Later Mughals ? Why could they not control the shifting of power to their provincial governors and local chieftains ?
2. Who was Shivaji ? What was the secret of his success ? How did he become a Chhatrapati ?
3. Discuss the relations between the Sikhs and the Later Mughals. How did the Sikhs established an independent state?

**PROJECT WORK**

1. Collect popular tales about rulers from the Rajputs, Sikhs, Marathas or Jats.
2. On an outline map of India locate the independent states that arose during the eighteenth century.