

Class Notes

European Contact

- The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in India, later followed by the Dutch (people by Netherlands) English and French.
- They built trading stations on the coast to buy and sell goods.
- At first, the Mughals thought the Europeans only wanted trade and did not see them as dangerous.
- Over time, trade gave Europeans more money, which they used to build armies and ships.

Decline of the Mughals

Problems of Succession

- The Mughal Empire had no fixed rule of succession (unlike in Europe, where the eldest son inherited).
- All sons of the emperor were considered potential heirs, so each prince felt entitled to the throne.
- Even during the lifetime of the emperor, sons plotted and fought to secure their claim.
- The uncertainty of succession weakened the empire and made it vulnerable to enemies.
- Farmans
- A farman was a royal order given by the emperor.
- Through farmans, the emperor could give land, jobs, or special rights to people or groups.
- In 1717, the Mughal emperor gave the British East India Company a farman that allowed them to trade freely in Bengal — this later helped the British gain more power.

Internal Rivals

- Powerful nobles and governors often acted like independent rulers instead of obeying the emperor.
- Rivalries among nobles led to plots, intrigues, and court factions, weakening central authority.
- Princes of the royal family fought each other in wars of succession, dividing the empire's strength.
- Regional rulers such as the Nawabs of Bengal, Awadh, and Hyderabad became independent and stopped sending revenue to Delhi.
- These rivalries wasted money and soldiers, making the empire weak against external enemies.

External causes

Nadir Shah invaded Delhi in 1739, looted wealth like the Peacock Throne, and destroyed Mughal prestige.

- Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded several times and defeated the Marathas at Panipat in 1761, creating chaos in north India.
- The Marathas weakened Mughal power by constant wars in the Deccan and capturing territories.
- The Sikhs in Punjab and the Jats near Delhi rebelled, seizing land and revenue from the empire.
- The British East India Company gained the 1717 farmān, (by Farrukh siyar) won Plassey in 1757, and slowly replaced Mughal authority.
- 1717 farman allowed the Company to trade freely in Bengal without paying customs duties, except for a small annual payment.

Decrees – Official orders or commands issued by a ruler or government that must be obeyed.

Alliances – Agreements between two rulers, states, or groups to support each other, often in war or politics.

Trade outposts – Small settlements or forts set up by traders in a foreign land to store goods, carry out trade, and protect their interests.

Envoy – A person (messenger or diplomat) sent by one ruler or country to another for official purposes.

Inadvertently – By mistake or without planning; something that happens unintentionally.

Amass – To collect or gather a large amount of something, usually wealth or power.

Decentralisation – When power and control move away from the central government to local rulers or provinces.

Karnatic Wars – A series of wars (1746–1763) in South India between the British and French (with Indian allies) to gain political and trading power.