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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. Discuss, in a nutshell, the causes of the downfall of the Mughal empire in India.

26 May, 2021 GS Paper 1 History

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the start and fall of Mughal empire.
- Discuss main causes for the decline of the Mughals.
- Conclude Suitably.

Introduction

The period of the Great Mughals, which began in 1526 with Babur's accession to the throne, ended with the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. Aurangzeb's death marked the end of an era in Indian history.

When Aurangzeb died, the empire of the Mughals was the largest in India. Yet, within about fifty years of his death, the Mughal Empire disintegrated.

Body

Some of the main causes for the decline of the Mughals were as follows:

- The government of the Mughals was a personal despotism and so its success depended on the character of the reigning ruler. The later Mughals were worthless and neglected the administration of the state.
- With the absence of a definite law of succession, there always occurred a war of succession; this weakened the stability of the government, and fostered partisanship at the cost of patriotism.
- The degeneration of the rulers led to the degeneration of the nobility, with factious quarrels and intrigues costing the empire heavily.
- The deterioration of the army also proved disastrous for the empire.
- The empire had become too vast and unwieldy to be efficiently governed from a central authority under weak rulers, especially under the existing conditions of transport and communication.
- Aurangzeb's religious policy was largely responsible, leading to revolts by Rajputs, Sikhs, Jats and Marathas.
- Aurangzeb's Deccan policy was a complete failure and was an important cause of the downfall of the Mughal empire.
- Invasions of Irani and Durrani kingdoms gave a death-blow to the Mughal empire.

Conclusion

There was no Indian power except Marathas that could fill the power vacuum created by the downfall of Mughal empire. However, Marathas' loss in Third battle of Panipat didn't let them become paramount power in India. This paved the way for the British to form an empire in India.