

UPSC Civil Services Examination

UPSC Notes [GS-I]

Topic: Akbar's Successors [Medieval History of India for UPSC]

Akbar's Successors: Jahangir (1605-1627), Shah Jahan (1627-1658), Aurangzeb (1658-1707)

Jahangir (1605-1627)

- In 1605, Prince Salim succeeded with the title Jahangir (Conqueror of World) after the death of Akbar.
- He defeated and imprisoned Son Khusrau.
- He also beheaded Guru Arjun, the 5th Sikh Guru and one of the supporters of Khusrau.
- One of his supporters, Guru Arjun, the fifth Sikh Guru, was beheaded.

Nur Jahan

- In 1611, Jahangir married Mehrunnisa who was known as Nur Jahan (Light of World).
- Asaf Khan elder brother of Nur Jahan was appointed as Khan-i-Saman, a post reserved for the nobles.
- In 1612, Asaf Khan's daughter, Arjumand Banu Begum (later known as Mumtaz), married Jahangir's third son, prince Khurram (later Shah Jahan).

Shah Jahan (1627-1658)

- Shah Jahan launched a continued war in the northwest frontier to recover Kandahar and other ancestral lands.
- His Deccan policy was more successful.
- He defeated the forces of Ahmadnagar and seized it.
- Both Bijapur and Golkonda signed a treaty with the emperor.
- Shah Jahan engraved four Mughal provinces in the Deccan – Khandesh, Berar, Telungana and Daulatabad

War of Succession

- The last years of Shah Jahan's reign were clouded by a bitter war of succession among his four sons
 1. Dara Shikoh (crown prince)
 2. Shuja (governor of Bengal)
 3. Aurangzeb (governor of Deccan)
 4. Murad Baksh (governor of Malwa and Gujarat)
- Aurangzeb emerged victorious in this struggle
- He entered the Agra Fort after defeating Dara

- He forced Shah Jahan to surrender
- Shah Jahan was confined to the female apartments in the Agra fort and strictly put under watch
- Shah Jahan lived for eight long years lovingly nursed by his daughter Jahanara.

Aurangazeb (1658-1707)

- Aurangazeb was one of the ablest kings of the Mughal.
- He assumed the title Alamgir, World Conqueror.
- In his first ten years of reign, his military campaigns were a great success.
- But in the latter part of his reign, he faced serious difficulties.
- The Jats and Satnamis and also the Sikhs revolted against him due to his harsh religious policy.
- The Deccan policy of the Mughals started from the reign of Akbar.
- Aurangazeb, as governor of Deccan, followed a belligerent Deccan policy.
- He concentrated on the northwest frontier in his first 25 years as the Mughal emperor
- In the same time, Sivaji, the Maratha Ruler carved an independent Maratha kingdom in the territories of north and south Konkan.
- Aurangazeb decided to invade Bijapur and Golkonda to hold the spread of the Marathas.
- He defeated Sikandar Shah of Bijapur and seized his kingdom.
- He proceeded against Golkonda and eliminated the Kutb Shahi dynasty.
- The destruction of the Deccan kingdoms was a political blunder by Aurangazeb.
- The barrier between the Mughals and the Marathas was removed and there ensued a direct confrontation between them.

Religious Policy

- His ideal was to transform India into an Islamic state.
- He created a separate department to enforce moral codes under a high-powered officer called Muhtasib.
- Drinking was prohibited. Cultivation and use of bhang and other drugs were banned
- Aurangazeb forbade music in the Mughal court
- He discontinued the practice of Jarokhadarshan
- He also discontinued the celebration of Dasarah and royal astronomers and astrologers were also dismissed from service
- When he began a policy of destroying Hindu temples.
- The celebrated temples at Mathura and Benares were reduced to ruins.
- In 1679, he reimposed jiziya and pilgrim tax.
- The celebration of Muharram was stopped
- His invasions against the Deccan sultanates were partly due to his hatred of the Shia faith
- He was also against the Sikhs and he executed the ninth Sikh Guru Tej Bahadur.
- His religious policy was responsible for turning the Rajputs, the Marathas and Sikhs into the enemies of Mughal Empire
- It had also resulted in the rebellions of the Jats of Mathura and the Satnamis of Mewar.

- Therefore, Aurangzeb was held responsible for the decline of the Mughal Empire.

Personality and Character of Aurangzeb

- Aurangzeb was an orthodox Sunni Muslim.
- In his private life, Aurangzeb was diligent and disciplined
- He was very simple in food and dress.
- He earned money for his personal expenses by copying Quran and selling those copies.
- He did not consume wine.
- He was proficient in Arabic and Persian languages.
- He was devoted to his religion and conducted prayers five times a day.
- He strictly observed the Ramzan fasting.
- He misunderstood the true nature of the Maratha movement and provoked them.
- Also, he failed to solve the Maratha problem and left an open sore.
- His policy towards Shia Deccan Sultanates also proved to be wrong.
- His antagonistic policies towards non-Muslims did not help him to rally the Muslims to his side and strengthened political enemies of the Mughal Empire.

Causes for the Downfall of the Mughals

- The Mughal Empire declined rapidly after the death of Aurangzeb.
- Taking this advantage, in 1739, Nadir Shah imprisoned the Mughal Emperor and looted Delhi.
- The religious and Deccan policies of Aurangzeb contributed to its decline.
- The weak successors and demoralization of the Mughal army were also the reasons for the decline.
- The financial difficulties due to continuous wars led to the decline.
- The neglect of the sea power by the Mughals was felt when the Europeans began to settle in India.
- Further, the invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali weakened the Mughal state.